

EVERY "BOY SCOUT" SHOULD READ THIS

AMERICAN WEEKLY INDIAN

BY COLONEL SPENCER DAIR

WRECKERS OF CARIBOU REEF

"A FINE LOT OF PLUNDER IS COM-
ING THERE IN THAT SHIP, BOYS,"
SNEERED THE WRECKER CHIEF.



BONANZA BILL
THE MAN TRACKER
OR
THE SECRET TWELVE
—
BY EDW. L. WHEELER

BONANZA BILL

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WRECKERS OF CARIBOU REEF

or

Border Bandits at Bay

By Col. Spencer Dair

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY.

EDNA EARLE—The wicked leader of the League of Twelve, an organization comprising a membership of twelve beautiful, wicked, women, which this scheming adventuress led, the league having been formed by the dead leader of the Wreckers of Caribou Reef. The devilish wiles of this girl almost secured for her a wealthy husband, when she masqueraded as Lucille Sturdevant, but after a long fight she was unmasked and arrested by a gallant young outlaw chaser, aided by as equally a "fly" young miner, direct from the gold-regions of old California.

BILL BARCLAY—A gallant, gay, humorous young gold-miner, who learned human nature in the Sierra Nevada mountains. He is "trimmed" once in a San Francisco variety theatre by the Diamond Queen, and then two years later turns the tables on the female outlaw, who secretly tries to murder him in a most dramatic fashion.

GEORGE GRAFTON—A young detective, whose love for the daughter of a wealthy Californian, hurries him forth to rescue her, when she disappears from her banker father's house in company with Bill Barclay. The hair-raising work this brave lad has to go through, makes a wonderfully interesting history.

BERNARD HAVENS—A wealthy San Francisco banker who is the "mark" selected by the League of Twelve, and by

blackmail, forgery, and deceit, they manage to nearly rob him of the fruits of his long life, and nearly trap him into a marriage with a woman, who is really Edna Earle, the Diamond Queen, also known as Madam Mystery.

MABEL McDOWEL—A girl used by Black Jake McDowel, as an instrument to mulct Banker Havens out of his money. She ousts the supposed daughter of Havens, and nearly wins in her blackmailing attempt.

BLACK JAKE McDOWEL—A blackmailer who uses his knowledge of facts surrounding a great English estate to try to make a heart romance a basis for betraying the heir to the noble property and to a title into the hands of the League of Twelve.

SYDNEY SEELYCE—The plotting, lying, ungrateful step-son of Banker Havens. A cheap trickster who seeks his level at last.

ZOE HAVENS—The charming daughter of Banker Havens, who after much heart-sorrow wins the man she loves, and makes a most successful wife.

LA PIERRE—A man of mystery, who at length breaks the seal of silence and absence about him, and tells a startling tale.

ROSE LAWTON—A beautiful outlaw member of the League of Twelve, who finally loses her place in criminal ranks through love.

CHAPTER I.

A MYSTERY OF A DANCE HALL.—THE GOLDEN GATE CITY.—
IN THE DAYS OF THE GOLD BOOM.—A MINER'S SPREE.

It was a bleak, rainy day!

The clouds drifted in a sodden sky. The rain swept the streets of old San Francisco in the days when it was known over the wide world as one of the most lawless as well as the wickedest city on America's Pacific coast.

Pools of water stood in the depressions of the pavements. Pedestrians hurried along with heads bent under umbrellas, and horses that drew wet carriages slouched along in a half-hearted way, as if even a brute was disgusted with the rainy weather.

Yet the bitter heart of the city, in the homes of a class of the truly venomous characters that infested portions of the town, was beating as of yore, while criminal and outlaw brains were plotting still in spite of the

rain, while in the Chinese quarter the almond-eyed Celestials were trading and also plotting, for in a town like old Frisco there is never a lack of foreign rogues and rascals, as well as domestic villains and ruffians.

Down one of the wind and rain swept streets at the close of a November day in the "seventies" a man could be seen wending his way without apparent object or aim.

His head was bowed on his breast. He seemed to move along with sightless eyes. Yet there was nothing at all extraordinary about his appearance. That is, nothing extraordinary for the period. He wore the rough clothes of a gold-miner. His flannel shirt was of faded red. He wore a pair of corduroy trousers, tight-fitting, and trimmed between the legs with long patches of buck-skin, to keep the cloth from wearing; top-boots, a wide-brimmed, black-felt hat, pulled down over his eyes, and it could be seen that he was a big man, stalwart in frame, and that his face, though tanned red-brown, was handsome in contour, his features being extremely fine cut; that his eyes were black, but capable of changing hue with changing thoughts, and that his dark-brown hair trailed down his back in natural ringlets over his broad shoulders. He was clean shaven, and showed a firm chin and fine lips. He was, without question, not more than twenty-two years of age.

The figure, as it stalked along breasting the waves of rain and the keen wind, with a half-suppressed shudder hitched a belt which was worn around the waist to an easier position. In the belt hung suspended a pair of heavy-caliber revolvers and a Bowie-knife. The man carried in his right hand a small leather valise, much the worse for wear.

The man wandered along, with the same unsteady gait. He aimlessly teetered up one wide street, into a narrower one, and then again lurched down another thoroughfare.

His general air was that of a man who didn't care whether he brought up in a palace or a prison!

The verdict of those who noticed the solitary man was that he was a miner from the interior of the beautiful Californian country, come to the city of the Golden Gate for the purpose of having a first-class spree!

There was little question that, so far as surface indications were concerned, the fellow was having his spree, all right. This was shown in his lack of heed of the rain that drizzled, or swept, and sang all around him, under the vagaries of the wind, keen and cutting, that blew everywhere at once.

Further evidence of drunkenness came when an occasional silly chuckle issued from the wanderer's lips; and it was a decidedly drunken chuckle, at that!

Finally the wandering miner brought up with a wild lurch around a corner into Bush street, where the twinkling lights, the wild bursts of music and mirth, attested the presence of many saloons. Into one or two the miner wandered, where he stowed away an amount of "red liquor" that would have shamed a drunken sailor from inserting into his system.

The miner then sauntered out into the rain and wind again, only to repeat the performance in a little while, muttering something about "tank-places," "time to water up" at the same time!

The miner finally reached the neighborhood of a variety theater, known to fame then, as the Bella Union, and he staggered and weaved as he tried to read a strip of awning-canvas stretched over the side-walk in front of the two-story frame building, upon which sprawled in huge red, fanciful letters, the words "Crimson Palace!"

"That's a werry good-looking ranch ter me," the miner murmured, as he steadied himself against a lamp-post, with an appreciative expression on his face. "I'll bet they sell suthin' par-tic'ler like a pizen trant'ler in thar—funniest thing I know; ain't (hic) no good booze in Frisco no more. Takes a cartload ter git a stranger in teown ter feel thet his (hic) blood's a circ'latin' in his dinged veins (hic). Think I'll crack this hyar booze palace and the-ater (hic)."

The door of the Crimson Palace at this juncture opened with distressing suddenness, and out shot the collapsed form of a very intoxicated man, who was thrust out into the rain, with no uncertain or gentle hand, and who came with such remarkable celerity that he measured his length on the wet pavement. The door was slammed shut behind the ejected bum, and then all was still so far as the door was concerned!

The miner grinned with a dawn of intelligence as he nodded drunkenly first at the closed door, and then at the man on the pavement with an expressive leer.

"This feller's full, too," the miner muttered. "Reckon he was a loaded noosance, in th' way, an' (hic) they's shot him out inter outer darkness, by thunder—plain bounced him out! Wall, my turn comes next. Them hogs in thar hed better git outen th' trough!"

And straight up to the door and into the dive trudged the miner, muttering to himself:

"I'm a pilgrim, a pilgrim, goin' inter a strange land."

The dazzled miner stood weaving uncertainly as soon as he entered the den, for at first sight he was blinded. A scene was revealed to him that he sensed, even in his drunken state, and which caused him to pause by the threshold of the door, to take a survey before venturing further into the interior of the place.

The entire interior of the building, he saw, was all thrown into a grand lofty apartment. The arched ceiling was beautifully frescoed. The walls were hung in crimson tapestry, to egg forward the name, "Crimson Palace," and the floors were beautifully covered with rare Oriental rugs, worth a small fortune, while everywhere stood mahogany tables, and chairs, and at one side of the room was a magnificent bar, ablaze with bottles, glasses, and many other glittering bits of bar furniture; but all ablaze in lights of crimson hue, for every bit of the bar was of crimson; the glasses were all of crimson glass; and the mighty mirror behind the bar was draped in crimson-silk!

Men of dark and evil appearance predominated in the place, under the light of splendid crimson chandeliers, although seated or walking about were swagger men of the social world of Nobs-Hill, dandies of the sand-lots, roughly clad miners, outlaws, pickpockets, thieves, and women, young, and beautiful, gowned magnificently, while many pretty girls in waiter-costumes darted here and there; others sauntered about in ballet-girl array, direct from a small stage at one end of the place, which was stocked with scenery, evidently used for "shows" in which the girls figured!

In the center of the room gaming-tables were set, where many games of chance enticed many of the frequenters of the place, while groups sat at the mahogany tables, or stood at the bar, and on all sides came the merry clink of glasses.

A cleared spot in the room had been turned into a dancing platform, and couples could be seen flitting around in the dreamy dance to the wild music of a violin and piano.

Nowhere, save in the city of Frisco, could such open,

flagrant, conditions exist. The dazed miner, Bill Barclay, had traveled largely in the wild western towns of the day, but he never before had beheld a scene as dazzling as this, or at least this was the opinion his dazed condition at the present time made him arrive at.

Curious glances were flashed at the miner as he stood glowering hither and thither, and at length a young woman gave him a sharp glance, rose from her seat at one of the tables and glided toward him—a magnificently formed girl of medium height—hardly out of her teens.

The beautiful creature was dressed in silks, and laces of great value, and diamonds glistened in her ears, at her throat and upon her rounded fingers. Her tempting mouth was smiling. A smile was in her magnetic brown eyes, almost as dusky at times as the night, while her scented brown hair framed her alluring face making her a witching personality.

A fascinating girl! Capable of winning instantaneous notice from any man. But there was an expression about the fair face that seemed to hint that the girl was capable of scorning a man who had lavished his last dollar upon her!

The fair creature glided toward the miner, extended her jeweled dimpled hand as she did so.

"Hello, partner!" she cried in musical tones. "You look good to me! This is not a merry company—there's not a quip or a jest in any of them. I hope you are merry—and would you be merrier, my miner friend?"

The miner laughed in admiration as he looked down into the lovely, appealing eyes.

"Say, little one," he hiccupped. "Le's git a drink, tergether."

"Of course, I'll drink with you, you darling," cried the lovely girl, as she took the miner by the arm!

CHAPTER II.

THE DIAMOND QUEEN.—SECRET OF AN OLD CELLAR.—A
COFFINED DOCUMENT.—A CONFESSION OF THE
LEAGUE OF TWELVE.

"What's your name?" asked the beautiful girl as she led the unresisting miner away.

"I'm a pilgrim," laughed the miner. "I'm a pilgrim in a strange land. But when I'm home, I'm Bill Barclay, miner, right down from Leopard Lode. An' I've got nothin' but money in my kick—nothin' but."

"Well, you're the first decent pilgrim I've captured today," the girl rejoined. "My name is Edna Earle, the Diamond Queen—also let me add the Queen of Hearts!"

"Good ernough—wot ye hev ter drink?" the miner cried.

"Oh! I'll take some bug-juice, straight," the young woman replied coolly, "and after a while we'll have some champagne—something just imported from France, you know, that sends the warm blood tingling through your veins!"

"Zactly!" Barclay muttered, as they received and dispatched the beverage at a swallow, the miner paying for it out of a handful of gold coin he drew from his pocket. "Champagne besser'n bug-juice. You'ser brick, ole girl—you'ser—you'ser—you'ser daisy. Ever git drunk?"

"Oh! no," Edna Earle replied, with a laugh. "I never drink enough to feel it. But come! yonder is a retired table and chairs where we can sit down, as I see your legs are pretty weak."

"Yes (hic), I's'er full's er b'iled owl, but zer nary er galoot as'ser can throw me, now!" the miner declared, as he allowed himself to be led away. "Kin lick any ozzer man in zer room for ten dollars!"

"No! no! you must not fight!" the Diamond Queen said, pulling him on. "You come with me, and don't get into trouble, for this is a hard hole, and a single man don't stand much of a show in a row!"

"W'asser you doin' here, then?" Barclay suddenly demanded, gazing at her with a tipsy stare, as if his suspicions had struggled out of the fog of intoxication that muddled his brain. "W'asser you doin' here?"

"Oh! I'm here on business. I gamble for money, and win!" the woman replied, with a strange laugh. "I am somewhat a stranger here, having been here but a couple of days."

"Oh!" Barclay said, accepting the explanation. "Have'r champagne?"

"Of course," and the girl signaled to one of the short-skirted waiter girls. "You are a stranger here, eh?"

"Stranger? wa'al, yes—werry much stranger. Come down (hic) from'er mines, an' meet some old (hic) cronies, an' getter full as'ser b'iled owl."

"Got rich up in the mines, I presume?" the Diamond Queen suggested, inquisitively.

"Nozzer 'zactly rich," the miner replied, thoughtfully—"gozzer much as I want, tho'," and he hefted his valise, satisfaction beaming from his fiery eyes. "Gozzer all in thar (hic)—gozzer more, too; vallyble papers (hic) as'ser prove all's 'bout it—zer son ov 'er lord—old England—wuth'er millions—y-you bet yer boots!"

And off the miner went into some incoherent mutterings that could not be defined.

The eyes of the Diamond Queen, however, gleamed with interested animation; she appeared suddenly to have grown nervous and excited, but put forth every effort to keep the fact from the notice of the man from the interior.

This was not a hard matter, for his eyes were getting heavy and his mental faculties dull.

"Come! come! wake up!" the siren of the Crimson Palace said, striking him on the shoulder. "Can't you be entertaining and gay? Here's the champagne, now. Drink a glass and it will enliven you."

"O' course'r will!" Barclay muttered, straightening up, perceptibly. "Wuzzer drink wi' you as'ser any ozzer girl, you bet. You'ser brick—you'ser beauty!"

"Yes, I'm a brick!" the young woman replied, sarcastically, "and a goose, too, perhaps, to fall in love with a tipsy pilgrim like you."

"W'asser zat?" Barclay demanded, brightening up. "You'ser love me?"

"Sh! not so loud—yes, I love you with all my heart!" was the reply. "I am all alone in the world, and rich too, and you are just taking to my eye. I'd marry you in a minnit, if I had the chance?"

"You'ser would?" the miner muttered, surveying her with drunken interest.

"Of course I would. I could soon cure you of your appetite for drink, and I am sure we should get along nicely together. Don't you think so, Billy?"

"Razzer reckon you'ser (hic) right. You'ser brick, you be, an' purty as'ser polecat. G'esser couldn't get a better 'un."

"What! you don't mean that you will take me as your wife?" the scheming girl said, in pretended surprise.

"O' course'r will," was the reply.

"Then, I am happy. When shall we go and get married?"

"Jesser soon'ser ready!" Barclay decided, with tipsy promptness. "I'ser ready now."

"I will be in a moment!" the young woman said, rising

hastily. "I will get my wraps, and take you to my father's house, in the Chinese quarter. There we will send for a minister, who will marry us at once. While I am getting ready, you may finish the bottle of champagne."

The young miner from the interior needed no second invitation, and accordingly tackled the bottle, as the Diamond Queen glided away.

No pilgrim was he to quail at tackling a half a bottle of champagne, and consequently the liquor had disappeared long ere Edna Earle reappeared, which was in a few moments. She was now enveloped in a water-proof cloak and hat, and a veil was tied down over her face, evidently to hide her identity.

She found Barclay going off into a doze.

The large quantity of bug-juice he had imbibed, together with the champagne had combined to nearly "do for" him.

"Come!" the Diamond Queen said, shaking him by the arm. "Rouse up and come with me. I am ready."

Barclay obeyed, accepting her arm as support, as he could not have walked alone. His volubility had vanished, inasmuch as the champagne had thickened his tongue beyond utterance.

Many curious glances were turned upon the Diamond Queen and her tipsy companion as she led him into the street, by the inmates of the Crimson Palace, but not a word was uttered, regarding her.

And more curious glances were leveled at her as she conducted her charge along the street, although it is no uncommon sight in the fast city of Frisco, to see women piloting along intoxicated men.

A group of young men stood upon the corner of Bush street as the Diamond Queen passed by, and from one there escaped a sarcastic laugh.

"Look! boys," he said, in cynical tone—"yonder is the Diamond Queen, and she's made a haul, by Jove! Lucky dog, that bummer, sure's my name is Grafton!"

Barclay heard the words, and, drunken sot though he was, he wheeled around with a growl, and struck the speaker a heavy blow full in the face.

Then Edna Earle pulled him on.

They soon reached and entered the Chinese district—that black spot in the reputation of the King City of the American Pacific.

It was now dark, and the bleak November rain drizzled down even faster.

The street through which they went was narrow, filthy and ill-smelling, and lined on either side by low dingy houses, from which emanated strange and uninviting sounds not calculated to favorably inspire a listener.

Edna Earle, however, seemed to pay no attention to the sounds or sights, but kept on, and as for Bill Barclay his head and brain were too muddled to notice anything.

His feet moved more from mechanical unsteadiness than from inclination to go, and he was so very tipsy that he was not sure whether he was afoot or on horseback, nor did he care which. His power of comprehension of course grew momentarily duller, until he absolutely knew nothing.

He was conscious of being assisted down a precipitous flight of stairs, but that was all. His sense of things utterly forsook him, and he knew no more.

For hours he was dead drunk! Then gradually slumber dissipated the dizzy effects of the liquors he had imbibed, and he finally awoke, with the dawning consciousness of a tremendous headache.

Before trying to discover where he was, he lay still

upon his back, and recalled what had happened, as well as he was able, up to the time when he lost all consciousness.

"Bill Barclay, you've been on a big drunk!" was his first soliloquized conclusion. "You've been upon a tear, such as you never before indulged in. And the next thing before ther probate court, is where and how are you?"

Crawling to an elbow rest, he peered around him.

The first glance disclosed the fact that he was lying upon the bottom of a damp, reeking cellar, in which was stored several varieties of decaying vegetables, and also some boxes in a further corner, and a few empty barrels.

The place was lighted by a few gray rays of light coming through a grating that evidently opened onto the street.

No other mode of access to or egress from the cellar was visible, so far as the miner was able to discover from his position.

"I wonder how I came in here?" he muttered, reflectively. "I certainly was too drunk to crawl through that grating, and there don't appear to be any other way to get in. And, too, what became of the gal who called herself the Diamond Queen? We was to get married, I remember, but if this is the way she serves her bridegroom, I opine I'll cancel dates. The soft side of a slab is better than an old cellar bottom, I opine."

Feeling of himself to see if he was all intact, the miner rose to his feet, and proceeded to make an investigation.

The result was to find no other place of entrance to the cellar, save the grating. And as the hole covered by the said grating was not over one foot and a half by two, in size, he was satisfied that he did not come in through that way.

The only conclusion left him was that he was still in a fog.

If any exit or entrance there was, other than through the grated aperture, it must be a secret one in one of three directions—through the bottom of the cellar, through the rough stone walls, or through the board ceiling overhead. The latter, Barclay concluded, was the most possible of all the places. Yet he could not, with what light was afforded by the little window, discover any signs of a trap or an opening.

"Waal, I'll be hanged; I don't see how they got me in here, or how I am going to get out," he soliloquized, moving about in the gloom. "Hello! I wonder what's in these boxes? Maybe I shall find an outlet, by tearing them away."

Strong were the arms of the miner, and acting upon impulse, he began to tumble away the boxes, one by one, toward the opposite side of the cellar. They had some day been dry goods boxes, but were now moldy and damp. A half dozen of them Bill Barclay rushed out of his way; then he stopped short, with an exclamation of surprise. Before him, protruding from between two boxes was the end of a coffin box! A rude affair, to be sure, yet the end of a rough pine coffin box.

"By Heaven! I've got into a tomb, I should judge, if I know anything about it," the miner muttered, eying the box, suspiciously. "I've heerd say that a nose that can distinguish good bug-juice from bad, can smell anything, and I've had a notion this old ranch smelled rather unhealthy. Reckon some galoot was so all-fired homely that he stowed hisself back in here, where no one would be apt to find his corpus. Hang me if I don't take a peep at his old system, anyhow, since I'm first man to discover the bonanza."

But few men who would not have been timid about disturbing a box of human remains, but Bill Barclay hesitated not. He was possessed of a good stock of courage—had roughed it for several years in the territories, and a dead person had no terror to him.

Accordingly, he pulled the coffin box out from between the other boxes, and pried off the lid with the blade of his hunting knife.

On raising the lid he found that the rough box was but the overcoat to a finer coffin, which was also screwed shut.

Lifting the coffin from the box, Barclay opened it. Inside lay a skeleton!

It was the skeleton of a man, evidently of dwarfed proportions. Judging by appearances, Barclay concluded that the skeleton must have reposed in the coffin for many years.

He was about to replace the lid on the coffin when he caught sight of a piece of white paper protruding from the lining of the coffin, and dropping the lid he grasped it. Four words caught his eyes as he turned over the paper and he riveted his attention upon them.

"The League Of Twelve," Barclay read!

CHAPTER III.

A DYING REVELATION.—"TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN."
THE STORY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE LEAGUE OF
TWELVE.

Bill Barclay, when he pulled the strange document from its place of concealment, felt sure that it was of importance in spite of the uncanny place in which he found it.

He found the document to have been written on a sheet of old fashioned foolscap paper. The paper had been closely written over on both sides.

With it in his hands he mounted one of the boxes near the grated window, and set himself at the task of deciphering the cramped and nearly illegible chirography.

It was evidently the dying revelation of the man whose skeleton Barclay had found in the coffin, and ran as follows:

"San Francisco, 18—

"To all whom it may concern:

"Know ye that I, Jarecki Armstrong, murderer, thief, road-agent, ocean pirate, poisoner, forger, counterfeiter, burglar, incendiary and villain-at-large, am narrowing down to the end of my career. After a strangely eventful life in the service of the devil, one of whose brightest stars I was, I have arrived at the age of eighty-four years, and death stares me in the face—death by consumption, which I have had for over a score of years. In looking back over my past life to-day, the impulse has seized me to take a pen, and jot down a few items of my life history, for the edification of whoever may find this, inasmuch as I have been one of the most wicked men in the world.

"I sprung from a great English family, and at the age of twenty-two, when the lord of mighty estates, and the possessor of a young wife and child, the devil got hold of me, and I was forced to flee for the crime of murder. I was apprehended however, and sent to Van Dieman's land for life. I speedily escaped, however, and took to the Southern seas as a pirate.

"For ten years I was one of the most bloody-handed and notorious buccaneers known to the world, sailing under various names. At the age of thirty-two I became cracksman and murderer in the city of London, and haunted that city until I was fifty years of age, when I came to Western America, to renew my career of crime.

"All my life, my sole delight has been to do something devilish and wicked. The greater the crime the more it pleased me.

"The first ten years of my life in America I devoted to every phase of crime defined in the dictionary. I was a fire fiend in Chicago, a forger in Cheyenne, a road-agent in Oregon, a cutthroat in Montana, a counterfeiter, a Wrecker at Caribou Reef, and a Border Bandit—ay, I was everything evil you can imagine.

"And now, before paying the final debt of nature, I have prepared and put into motion the grandest criminal achievement of the whole of my life—the League of Twelve. For over a year I have been seeking women of a will to serve me and the devil, and have them at last collected. Each one has a fascination for one particular sin, and has taken an awful oath to make that sin the consuming fire of her life—that sin to be her constant crime by which to bring gold into the coffers of the League, who are all bound together as one, until sufficient gold has been collected to build a monument over my grave of solid gold, the lettering to be of priceless diamonds.

"The League is to be commanded by one of the most exquisitely beautiful women in the world, of tender age. I have fitly named her as Madam Mystery. She it is who carries all my papers, all my gold, all my love. In behalf of the League, she is forger. No. 2 is the strangler; No. 3 is the burglar; No. 4, the robber; No. 5, the pickpocket; No. 6, the counterfeiter; No. 7, the grave-robber; No. 8, the poisoner; No. 9, the gambler; No. 10, the libelist; No. 11, the torturer, and No. 12 the tracer and decoy. No effort to find them will be availing, for they are hidden away where the sharpest eyes would not think of looking for them. Ha! ha! it is a grand scheme.

"But I must stop. My life is ebbing out, methinks.

"The League of Twelve,

Who dig and delve

In the service of the devil,

Shall reach the acme of their hopes

And find the highway level.

"Signed,

"Jarecki Armstrong,

"The Man of a Thousand Aliases."

The singular document ended as it had begun—strange and mystical!

Bill Barclay stood in the old cellar, pondering over the strange revelation that had been made to him, with a white, awe-struck face!

CHAPTER IV.

A SHADOW OF RUIN.—ONE YEAR LATER.—BERNARD HAVENS
IN TROUBLE.—THE HAND OF THE BLACKMAILER.—A
STRANGE LETTER.

"Ruin! Disaster! Disgrace stares me in the face! My God! If I only could get to the truth! If I could only discover the filthy agent of the horrible conspiracy that is sapping my life and my financial strength away together—for if I lose my vast fortune I can never withstand the shock! Oh, that I might find the fiend, that I might tear out his vile, wicked heart!"

The scene was in the magnificently appointed library of one of San Francisco's richest bankers, Bernard Havens. The wealthy banker was pacing up and down the room with nervous tread, and pale agitated face, and his daughter Zoe, who reclined near by in an easy chair watched her father with an anxious face. Near by sat Sydney Seelyce, the son of the banker's second wife.

Bernard Havens was a portly man of medium height, with a face that the hand of time had somewhat wrinkled, but which was not yet wholly homely. His hair and slight "Burnsides" were iron-gray, and his eyes, as well as his face, were dark and gloomy as he paced to and fro across his sumptuous parlor-library, his hands folded behind his back, and head bowed.

Sydney Seelyice was a dapper little snob of effeminate appearance, with a sallow, sickly complexion, and eyes, mustache and hair of the same hue, while his attire was characteristic of his own idea of himself—very swagger!

Zoe Havens was one of those plain girls who are more than pretty. She possessed a handsome form, and a clear, well-chiseled face, with eyes of deepest hazel, and hair tinted a dusky brown. Many a critic would no doubt have pronounced her homely, because she was not over gay and a votary of the very latest fashions.

Her attire was rich but not loud; her movements were graceful but not dashing; her speech was sound, interesting and characteristic of education and intelligence, but not voluble or addicted to fashionable slang.

No flighty maiden was Zoe Havens, but a level-headed girl, whose eighteen years had not been spent without bringing to her those most indispensable qualities in women—quiet grace, quiet beauty, and quiet knowledge of the world-at-large, and the moving characters thereof.

An expression of anxiety now mantled her face, however, and tears stood in her eyes causing them to glisten like diamonds. Seelyice, smoking a cigarette in an arm-chair a few feet away, thought he had never seen her look so pretty as now.

"But is there no way to detect the thief, and check the drain, dear papa?" Zoe asked, in reply to the banker's words. "Can no trap be set that will catch the robber?"

"No! no! dear; you do not understand. It is not in the burglar form that I am being robbed, but entirely by another system. Forged checks and forged drafts and forged notes are what is doing the mischief. They are pouring in every day. Only this morning a note was presented against me by an Eastern Bank, for five thousand dollars, bearing my signature—I could have sworn it was mine—and being several days overdue, I of course was obliged to pay it, or let it go to protest, and thereby sacrifice my honor as a prompt business man. If these drains continue, I shall be penniless within three months."

"I'm afraid so, too, daddy," Seelyice said, with a yawn. "You certainly ought to have an investigation made among your employees."

"Ah! my boy, you talk foolishly. There's not a man within my bank whom I could not trust with any amount, or under any circumstances. No! no! it is not there I have to look, for it is outside parties who are working the evil."

"Put some good detective on the track, papa. You will never detect the criminals, until you do," Zoe said, advisingly, as she rose and took the banker's arm and looked pityingly up into his face.

"Detectives!" the banker said, with a sudden sneer—"bah! I'd not trust the pick of them; they're all a set of meddlesome Bohemians, living on their wits, and a five dollar note would buy the best of them over to the service of the devil."

"But George Grafton, papa—he is a trusty gentleman, and they say a very expert tracer?" Zoe suggested, an expression of sunny hope creeping into her demure eyes.

"Bah! a miserable Bohemian loafer, whom your girlish fancy has pictured a hero, because he chanced to save

you from a hoodlum mob. Zoe, you must dispel all thoughts of that fellow; he is not worthy of your notice."

"Daddy is right," Seelyice accorded, shooting Zoe a triumphant glance. "The fellow, Grafton, is a consummate rascal—a gambler and a Bohemian bum, and I am sure *ma belle* Zoe can make a better choice."

"No doubt you may believe I might get so desperate as to accept you!" the banker's daughter snapped, her lip slightly curling with contempt.

"Ah! there is always hope as long as there is life," the young man replied, with a bland smile. "I am sure daddy would not object to such a match."

"It matters not!" Zoe replied, very decidedly. "Whoever I marry, if I marry at all, you may rest assured that *you* will not be the man."

"Ah! do not say so, my fair step-sister. The minds of people change so often, as well as circumstances, that one may always hope when their chances seem most slim," Seelyice laughed, coolly, as he arose and sauntered from the room.

After he had gone, Bernard Havens turned to his daughter, an anxious expression upon his face. "You should not thus discourage the boy, Zoe. He will eventually be a rich and popular man, as his little gold-mine, up near Crescent, is gradually growing more profitable, and I believe he would make you a good husband."

"Don't think of such a thing, papa, dear," Zoe replied, earnestly. "Sooner than marry Sydney Seelyice, I'd remain an old maid, all my life. I do not like him. He is soft, shallow and effeminate, and, I suspect, has a disposition to be treacherous. When I marry, I want a *man* whom I can respect and look up to, as brave and fearless. That, Sydney Seelyice is not, nor ever can be."

"Well! well! I will not argue with you, my dear, for I have truly greater troubles to worry me, but I trust you will treat Sydney with more favor. I must now go to the bank, for a few hours, and see what is to be done."

"Oh! papa! if you would but consent to lay your case before Mr. Grafton, I am sure—so sure, he could and would help you. He is young, keen of perception, sharp in invention, and quick to draw correct conclusions. I am sure he would ferret out the whole mystery, and thus check your losses."

"Well! well! pet"—and the banker smiled fondly down upon her—"your faith in the fellow is certainly very abundant, and they say a woman's faith is much to be depended upon; so I will consider your appeal and perhaps call upon him. And, now, a kiss, and I will be gone."

The kiss was readily given, and then the banker left his handsome mansion, and walked toward the business part of the city, in preference to riding.

The bank of which he was sole proprietor and director, was one of those many fine structures that do credit to the city of Frisco, and he soon arrived there and entered, proceeding at once to his private office upon the second floor.

Several letters lay upon the desk awaiting examination, and laying aside his hat and coat, he seated himself to peruse them. They were mainly business letters from other banking institutions, but there was one that Bernard Havens held in his hand and regarded in curiosity, before opening it.

It was enclosed in a yellow envelope, and directed in a bad hand, with poor ink.

"I wonder who can be the author of this rude scrawl?" he mused, reflectively. "Surely none of my regular correspondents."

He finally tore it open, and glanced over the contents, his face gradually assuming a hard, grim look. The mis-

sive was illy written, misspelled, and dirty. It ran as follows:

"MISTER BERNARD HAVENS:

"I rite this few lines ter let ye no thet ther time o' my purchased silence hez expired, tu-day, an' I am goin' ter make yu hump, like blazes, yu bet. I've got the gal, yet—leastways she's in Frisco—an' she hez growed up ter be a smashin' yung woman, an' you'll find her all rite. Now, ye've got ter oust out ther uther gal, an' put my gal Mabel in her place, or you'll git w'at ye doan't want. The gal nose she's yer darter, an' ther air ter them big estates over in England, an' she'll call on ye purty quick ter take persession o' ther premises. Mebbe I'll cum down an' see how matters jibe, purty soon, an' til yer see me, I remane youre obedient servant:

"JAKE McDOWEL."

"P. S. Doan't get on yur ear, but submit ter ther inevitable."

As he finished the epistle, the banker leaned back in his chair, and groaned aloud.

"My God! I hoped the villain was dead!" burst from his lips. "But he is still alive, and determined. Would to Heaven I had proof, but I have none. Zoe must know the worst—yet I had hoped to keep all from her. It would break her heart to know that she is not my daughter, but the offspring of the man McDowel. She is my child—I will never, never believe different. The other is an impostor foisted upon me by McDowel. Yet, oh! Heaven! how can I prove it? The arch villain is ready to swear that his claimant is my daughter—she whom he stole from her cradle, when a babe and spirited away, leaving his own child in her stead. No! no! it is a lie—a damnable scheme on his part to make his child the heiress to the great inheritance. Yet how can I prove this? Alas! in no way! I am without weapons of defense. But, Zoe, must not know it yet—she must live on in the even tenor of her life, ignorant of all the great impending trouble until in some manner I can remove it. I must approach this Mabel McDowel and buy her off, until I can get to work—until I can get proof of her falsity—until in some way, if I have to overthrow heaven and earth, I can save the Havens' inheritance for Zoe; or—" and a dark cloud came over the banker's face, as he abruptly looked at the handsomely framed portrait of a boyish face that hung on the wall above his desk—"or for him, who has for fifteen long years been a—a—God knows what. Oh! Ray! Ray! where are you, as I look upon your handsome boyish face—my son—my long-lost boy."

And, overcome with emotion the banker bowed his head forward upon his desk, and wept silently.

He finally straightened up, however, and brushed the tears from his eyes.

"I am weak," he muttered, huskily. "It nearly prostrates me to recall the past. But I must not weaken, now. All my strength shall be required to battle with mine enemies. I will take Zoe's advice and go and see the fellow Grafton. Perhaps he may be able to help me in some way, and I shall need the counsel and aid of some trusty person."

Donning his coat, Bernard Havens seized his hat and quitted the bank.

He remembered noticing a dingy little office on Coast Street, once, bearing the sign of George Grafton, and thither he now wended his way to find that the dingy office

had recently been replaced by a new brick one; of about the same size, but looking much better than its predecessor.

The door was open, and the banker entered, to find the interior furnished with simple but neat taste, and a young man seated in an easy-chair, with heels elevated upon his desk, engaged in smoking a cigar and reading a newspaper.

He was three or four and twenty years of age, well formed and not unhandsome in face, with a fine mustache and curling hair, and a brown eye, whose keenness was penetrating.

The heels and paper came down with a jerk, as the banker entered, and he was handed an easy-chair with a cordial "Good-day, sir."

"Thank you," he said, becoming seated. "I called to have a little talk with George Grafton the detective. Is he in?"

"That is my name," the detective said, bowing. "Anything I can do for you?"

"Yes, perhaps there is. I was referred to you by my daughter, who appears to know you, or of you. My name is Havens."

"Ah! yes," Grafton said, nodding; "I thought your face was familiar, having seen you several times. Your estimable daughter I have had the pleasure of meeting on several occasions, and am pleased that she should remember me. If there is anything I could do for you, I am sure I shall take pleasure in doing it."

"Very well, sir. I suppose you have had some experience in your line of business?"

"Yes, sir; I flatter myself that I have had considerable experience and success in my calling. Nearly every week I get something to do in the way of ferreting out criminals and crimes."

"Then I will briefly state my case," the banker said, which he did, relating in detail how he had been troubled with forged checks, notes and drafts.

When he had finished, George Grafton took out a memorandum-book, and jotted down the substance of what he had heard.

CHAPTER V.

BERNARD HAVENS TELLS A STORY—A PROJECTED MAD MARRIAGE.—A MISSIVE FROM MADAM MYSTERY.

George Grafton, the detective, smiled, as he wrote the facts imparted to him in the book, not that he did not remember them well, but simply as a blind to allow him to get to the truth. He needed time in which to think, compare, and quietly get from the banker himself, his inmost thoughts.

"You are not the only man thus afflicted, Mr. Havens," the detective at length remarked, to his caller. "But you seem to have been bled a trifle the strongest. I have had my attention called to this case before, but have been able to make no discovery of the robbers. The depredations are being committed I should judge by an organized gang of rascals, to whom also may be laid a great share of what is known in this city just now, as 'a reign of crime'—strange murders, burglaries, incendiarisms, and bank robberies—"

"You are undoubtedly right," hurriedly interrupted the banker approvingly, "and if you can bring the miscreants to justice, it will be a great help to me."

"I shall work to accomplish that end, most certainly," Grafton said, "and I shall give your case particular attention, as you are the heaviest loser. By the way, before

you go, I have a few questions to put that we detectives always use—some of them very impudent, perhaps, but yet necessary to us in order that we may know just where to begin, without beating around the bush. The first one is: are you married to a second wife?"

"I have been married, but my second wife died shortly after our marriage."

"You are sure of this?"

"Certainly."

Grafton paused to jot down something on his memorandum; then continued:

"Have you any confidants in your business other than your daughter?"

"None," was the reply.

"You have a step-son?"

"I have."

"Does he not know anything concerning your business?"

"Very little, sir, as I never took him into my confidence."

"Have you any acquaintance whatever with fast men or women, Mr. Havens?"

"None, sir."

"Is there any party of suspicious character, in the city, who has a sample of your chirography and signature?"

"I hardly know. I do considerable correspondence with business and banking firms, but have a separate signature that I use in filling out banking business. There is only one other person that has been able to master it."

"Who is that?"

"His name is Barrister, and he is my cashier."

"A man of unblemished character, I presume?"

"Most assuredly. He has been in my employ for many years."

"Very well. You may leave your signature with me, if you please, as it may be of use to me."

This the banker did, writing upon a card in a very odd style, and handing it to George Grafton.

"Is there anything else?"

"One thing, yet—is there any woman in the city for whom you have a fancy, or to whom you have been paying attentions with a view to matrimony?"

"I must decline to answer that question, sir, as it can have no bearing upon the case!" the banker said, stiffly, as he rose and buttoned his coat, preparatory to departing.

"Oh! all right—no offense, I trust, sir, as the question is one of our formula."

"No offense," was the reply. "If you discover and bring the culprits to justice, I will hand you five thousand dollars as my recognition of your services." And then bowing haughtily, the wealthy banker donned his hat, seized his cane, and strode from the office.

George Grafton whistled a few snatches from the opera of "La Somnambula," and trimmed his finger-nails with scrupulous care, before he allowed his thoughts to merge into comment.

"I hit closer than I supposed I was going to," he muttered, glancing through the window after the stately banker, who was just turning a distant corner. "So Miss Zoe's model papa is negotiating for a new Mrs. Havens, eh? Well, well—perhaps he has a right to. It won't be amiss for me to find out whether it's a miss that he's after. As for this wholesale forging business that is going on, I must set my wits to work, and get at the bottom of it. It appears to me that the city is overstocked with criminals, or else all the devilry is created by a few devils consolidated into a league."

"Waal, I opine, stranger, you've hit the nail squar' on

the head; thar is a gang of the hellions, known as the League of Twelve, an' you an' I ar' ther pilgrims as must ferret out ther case!"

It was a deep, cool voice that uttered the words, and George Grafton gazed around with a start, to behold a stalwart stranger standing in the doorway. No common appearing personage—a young man of handsome features and an equally handsome figure—with face browned by exposure to the sun, eyes dusky and penetrating in their expression, and long hair and graceful mustache—a man whose appearance was most extraordinary on account of his dress which consisted of a suit of handsomely tanned buckskin, fringed with human hair, evidently; top-boots of the cavalry pattern but of the finest leather, and a wide-rimmed slouch hat of white felt turned up on one side and fastened by a gold-hilted feather and pin. In a belt about his waist was a heavy revolver and a sheathed-knife.

George Grafton made a quick inventory of him, and at once decided that he was what the people of the Far West term a "hummer."

"I presume you were addressing your remarks to me," the detective said, rising and wheeling forward a chair.

"I opine yes," the dashing stranger replied, entering the office and accepting the proffered seat. "I was passing by when I chanced to get a view of your phiz, and remembering it, concluded to cast anchor, which I did, in time to hear a portion of your soliloquy."

"Just so," Grafton replied; "but you have the best of me; I cannot say that I know you."

"Think not? Well, perhaps your memory ain't as retentive as mine. Reflect, however; don't ye remember something that occurred just one year ago to-day?"

"I have a safer memory than that given me by nature," the detective replied, with a smile, and he turned to a large diary that lay upon his desk. "Ah! one event of a year ago to-day was not particularly interesting to me. I was knocked down by a drunken pilgrim, whom a certain female gambler of this city had in tow!"

"And that drunken pilgrim was I," the visitor said, with a quiet laugh. "You made some remark thet didn't strike me favorably, and my right arm spasmodically went out like the leg of a *burro*. To-day I remembered your face."

Grafton smiled, rather grimly.

"You have considerable cheek to come here and tell me of it," he said.

"Of course," the other replied. "Cheek is one of the component parts of my composition. Without it, I could not exist. I trust you cherish no malice toward me, because of the little affair of a year ago?"

"Well, no, I guess not. You were drunk at the time, and a drunken man is hardly responsible for what he does."

"Karect! and I offer you all the apology in the world. I opine I was pretty drunk that day. It was my first and last visit to Frisco, until to-day, when I've come back to raise a breeze. Your name is George Grafton—mine is Bonanza Bill Barclay, frum the interior. You are a detective; I propose to engage in a little of the same line, myself, and so suggest that we unite."

"For the purpose of investigating—what?"

"The forgery business you were soliloquizing about. I hold a valuable key. Read!"

And taking from an inner pocket a sheet of stained paper, Barclay handed it to the detective, forthwith.

George Grafton read it, a quiet gleam of enthusiasm entering his eyes.

"By Jove! it is the very thing!" he exclaimed, slapping Bonanza Bill upon the shoulder as he finished. "It is worth thousands of dollars, that document. I have suspected the existence of some such league of crime, but have had no proof of it. Tell me where you found this piece of evidence."

Barclay obeyed by relating how he had discovered the document in the coffin that he had unearthed in the old cellar in the Chinese quarter.

"And," he added in conclusion, "one of the persons I am now anxious to encounter, is the young woman whom you saw leading me from the Crimson Palace. She led me into the Chinese quarter, and then my senses fled. When I awoke I found myself in the cellar, as I have related. I made my escape through a trap that opened into an empty room above; the whole building then being tenantless. The Diamond Queen must have taken me to the cellar, and then fled with a valise which I had brought along, as I failed to find any trace of it. The valise contained gold and greenbacks to the amount of over eight hundred dollars, besides valuable papers that I would not have lost for all the gold in California. It is for those papers that I am now in search. I must find them—*will* find them, if I have to search heaven and earth!"

The miner had grown greatly excited, and now smote the table by which he sat with a blow that caused it to jingle.

"Did you search for the Diamond Queen after your escape from the cellar?" Grafton asked.

"Yes; about a week I spent in endeavoring to find her, which was as long as I could beat the restaurants out of my board. I then was obliged to hoof it back to the mines to recuperate my finances."

"You had the valise when you entered the Chinese district?"

"Yes—the woman was carrying it, I think."

"Then she was undoubtedly the thief. And it occurs to me, also, that this same woman may be one of this League of Twelve, since you found yourself in the cellar where the corpse of the old outlaw was concealed. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, I have thought of the same thing, as there is a significance in it. The first thing is to find the Diamond Queen."

"Hardly. She is not at the Crimson Palace any more, and I don't know where she is. Besides, if, indeed, she be a member of the League of Twelve, the stolen valise was undoubtedly turned over into the hands of Madam Mystery, the forger, who, according to the document here, is chief cook and bottle-washer of the gang. So to her you will have to look to find your papers, it's my opinion."

"Perhaps you are right," Barclay admitted. "Somebody must hash up the spoils. I am not particular who it is."

"I trust we shall find them," Grafton said, thoughtfully. "Our first study must be to find out the headquarters of this League of Twelve. Women though they are, they are a fierce set, and I'd ten times rather tackle a desperate man than a desperate woman. And they say that women are the best hidiers, too, and it will be sharp work to distinguish those whom we want from those we don't want."

"All of which is good sense," Bonanza Bill assented, "but we must hunt the trail like the Comanches do. If we can but once spot a single member of the league, we are all right. I never yet struck a lead without tracing it up and finding a bonanza at the end of it. That's why

they call me Bonanza Bill. I'll place you in the lead, and when you want me, I'll be thar!"

"Very well. I will visit the various banks, this afternoon, and see what the reward prospects are, and then join you this evening, ready for business. We will make a round of the most notorious gambling saloons, first, and watch for a clew. If we fail to find any, we will look elsewhere. I will be at the Crimson Palace, at seven, tonight, in disguise, but will speedily let you know who I am. From the Crimson Palace we will go to Wolf's Ranch, which is perhaps the worst den of thieves and cutthroats in the city, being located in the heart of the Chinese district."

"Agreed; and, now, as we are going 'snucks' in this game, let's shake hands, that shake being the seal of a silent vow on our parts, of fidelity, league and alliance, until the League of Twelve is bu'sted!"

"With all my heart!" Grafton said, heartily, and rising the two men grasped hands, firmly.

Then, after a few more words, Bonanza Bill Barclay left the detective's office, and strode away.

Through the streets he went with firm step, so much in contrast with the gait he had carried, a year before, and his dashing appearance attracted many curious glances.

The miner hurried to the Palace hotel where he had previously engaged accommodations. He went directly to his apartment.

And upon a center-table in his room, he found a letter addressed to him which he tore open.

He gave a low whistle when he read the following:

Sir—Your mission here is known, and unless you leave the city before night, you are a doomed man.
Madam Mystery.

CHAPTER VI.

THE NEW CANDIDATE.—BONANZA BILL IS PUZZLED.—CONSPIRATORS PLOT TO DESTROY A GIRL'S HAPPINESS.

Bonanza Bill scratched his head, and re-read, and re-read the foregoing strange missive!

No uncertain sound was there in this warning of Frisco's outlaw Queen.

Bonanza Bill was not a man who temporized with situations. He knew what the note meant.

"I reckon that means me," he muttered. "It's addressed to Bill Barclay, an' I allow thar ain't no two Bill Barclays in this city. The League of Twelve knows that I've come down ter make it red-hot fer 'em, and unless I bounce out afore night, they're goin' ter bounce me. Kerect! I perceive, as ther feller said, when he run afoul an elephant in the dark. They'd awfully like to hev me huff it back fer Leopard Lode, but I can't see the p'int wuth a cent. I came down here to find my lost papers, and I will find them, hit or miss. This note, however, is received opportunely, as it puts me on my guard against the League of Twelve. Ah! my beautiful siren Diamond Queen, methinks you'll find me on your trail, directly, with the determination of a bloodhound, and the mercilessness of a sweeping tempest."

Stowing the message away in his pocket, the miner rung for a waiter, from whom he later received a bountiful supper in his room, and did full justice to it.

He then lingered about the hotel until darkness had enveloped the city, when he set out for the Crimson Palace.

On reaching it he entered, without ceremony. He had

paid the place a visit earlier the same day, but had found nothing of Edna Earle, the Diamond Queen.

Nor could he discover her now.

The room was partly filled with sporting men and women, most of whom were gamblers by profession, a few loungers and variety performers from the stage comprising the remainder.

Many eyes were turned upon Bonanza Bill, as he entered, and sauntered about among the tables, watching the various games.

No common appearing pilgrim was he, but one of the cool characters of the mines whom even a brave man hesitates to tackle.

Even the female gamblers did not light upon Barclay, with the usual avidity.

That cool, critical gleam in his eye they were afraid of.

As for the dashing miner, he paid but little attention to the games, as one would have inferred by his close scrutiny of the parties in the room.

He was endeavoring to find which of the lot was George Grafton, but at last gave up. No one present was there whom he believed to be the detective, and when an hour had passed he came to the conclusion that perhaps Grafton had been detained and could not meet his engagement. He had about concluded to leave for his hotel, when the door opened, and a new character entered.

A little old man, with a painful hump on his back, and a stoop that rendered him very nearly a dwarf, as he hobbled along on one crutch—a man with straggling, unkempt beard and hair of purest white, and a face that, where not covered with hair, was a fiery color, as though inflamed by a too excessive use of liquor.

His garments, boots and hat were also much the worse for wear.

"That must be Grafton," Barclay concluded, when he had taken a good survey of the newcomer. "It is a clever disguise, if a disguise it is, anyhow."

On entering the saloon the old hump-back took off his battered hat in his right hand, and began passing it around in hope of getting stray pennies, but was unsuccessful. No time or disposition had these gamblers to part with their small change in the behalf of mercy or charity; consequently the veteran fared slimly in the Crimson Palace. A half-dime from Bonanza Bill, and a rusty copper from the barkeeper was the amount of his collected treasures.

Enough was it, however, for one purpose, and up to the bar hobbled the veteran, and planked his six cents upon the counter, with a suggestive smack of his lips, and the single order of English savoring:

"H'ale!"

The drink was readily served to him, and after pouring it down at a gulp, he turned and watched the games with quiet satisfaction. Gradually, however, he worked around to where Bonanza Bill had seated himself.

"Come," he said in a low tone; "it is no use to linger here, as nothing will be gained. We will go to Wolf's Ranch, in the Chinese district. Perhaps we may be able to strike a trail there, if anywhere."

"You are Grafton?" Barclay demanded.

"Of course. Is my disguise so deep as to baffle your sharp eyes?" was the reply.

"It is certainly perfect," the miner declared.

"Good. It will need to be perfect, for I am widely known in Frisco, and as George Grafton I am not esteemed any too high in the black haunts sacred to the Chinese slum. Come! I will lead, and you can follow a few moments behind me, to avoid suspicion. Look out

for yourself when we get in the quarter, for danger lurks there in every shadow."

"Correct. Go ahead; I'll keep you in sight!"

With a nod and a grunt the old hump-back hobbled away, and soon left the saloon.

Bonanza Bill then lit a fresh cigar, and followed in his wake out into the streets.

Waiting until the hump-back was several rods in advance, he sauntered along in pursuit.

Street after street they traversed, until finally they entered the Chinese quarter by one of its narrowest, darkest thoroughfares.

People were hurrying to and fro—people of all nations and callings, the Celestials predominating in numerical count. A hard-looking crowd of citizens were these nocturnal perambulators, and, though no coward he was, Bonanza Bill Barclay kept one hand conveniently near his revolver. Enough of the wild phases of western life had he seen to thoroughly believe the saying—"a man don't allus need a weapon, but when he wants it, he wants it powerful bad."

The hump-back still hobbled on, and Barclay followed.

He had received instructions to do so, and he depended much upon the shrewdness and good sense of Grafton, whom he had set down as "no slouch."

It has long been a saying in the Friscan city that the blue-coated servants of the law were afraid to enter the Chinese district; anyhow, only on the occasion of some frightful crime or the pursuit of some extraordinary criminal can the said officials be found in the uncanny precinct.

Fearful stories of dark nocturnal doings in the Chinese section are told at the tea-tables, at the clubs and in the saloons, and men who pride themselves as controllers of the city government look grim but say nothing when the stories or complaints are brought to their notice of the great existing evils.

Yet it was toward this dangerous and debatable ground that the hump-back and his companion stole—not then knowing that they were taking steps toward a band of conspirators pledged to plunge an estimable girl into unhappiness—and what was worse, pledged besides to the life of the outlaw!

CHAPTER VII.

SYDNEY SEELYCE SHOWS HIS HANDS.—THE STORY TOLD BY A WOMAN OF MYSTERY.—THE REAL DAUGHTER OF THE BANKER.

After leaving the detective's office, Bernard Havens hastened at once toward his own magnificent residence on Nob's Hill.

On coming in sight of it, he saw a stylishly attired young woman standing upon the steps, in the act of ringing the bell.

With a muttered curse he bounded forward, and in a moment was beside her.

"Stop!" he hissed, jerking her hand from the bell knob, fiercely. "Who are you? Speak! tell me?"

"I am Mabel McDowell!" the young woman replied, "—or, still better, I am Zoe Havens!"

"You lie; you are an impostor!" the banker breathed, savagely. "But, stop! I will not anger you. Come with me; I must have a few words with you, in private."

He opened the door and entered, the woman following him. She was young, pretty, graceful—far from his expectations. Her eyes were dusky brown, and magnetic in their glance—her hair was of the same hue, and her

features were finely molded and pretty, the mouth wearing a winning expression.

Her dress, wrappings and hat were all costly, and rich in appearance. No such woman had the banker expected to see, and he led the way to his private study, with feelings of surprise.

When they were seated, facing each other, the new claimant spoke:

"You were evidently expecting me, dear papa?" she said, interrogatively, as she removed her gloves.

"Yes, I was expecting you, but only since an hour ago, when I received a note from Jake McDowel."

"Exactly; I had him write, so that you would be prepared to receive me. I suppose you are glad that kind Providence has restored you your child, after so many years!"

"Curse you, no! you are *not* my child—you are some scheming adventuress grown up from pauperdom, whom Jake McDowel had designed to foist upon me. You are no child of mine, I say!"

"But, can you prove this assertion, sir?" Miss McDowel asked, with unruffled calmness. "I really think not. McDowel claims to have stolen me from your house, when I was but an infant, substituting his own child in my place. To this end he is willing to take his oath."

Bernard Havens groaned, inwardly. He foresaw that McDowel held the winning hand—knew that as for himself he was without weapons of defense.

"And you believe that you are my daughter?" he demanded, gazing at her keenly.

"I presume I do," was the decided reply; "at any rate, I am not averse to occupying the position."

"But have you no feelings for her who has always been a loving daughter to me? Would you willingly deprive her of her position and send her adrift nameless?"

"She is nothing to me," the girl claimant replied, with the same tormenting independent coolness. "She is usurping my rights, and must, of course, step out. As for being nameless, perhaps she could negotiate with McDowel for a share of his name and fatherly protection; or, if your royal nibs thinks it too humiliating to boost her out of the house, I shall need a waiting-maid, and you can engage her in that capacity. I am not particular what becomes of her, as long as she has the good grace to step out of my place, I am sure."

"Girl! you are a heartless wretch—the same in spirit as your ruffianly colleague. You are no daughter of mine, and I will not countenance you as such—at least, not at present. You care not a fig for me—you have not even a tithe of respect for me. Tell me—is this not so?"

"Undoubtedly it is quite correct."

"And your main object, therefore, must be to attain wealth and position."

"You are right again."

"I thought so. To be my daughter is no object, so long as your position and money are insured. Now, I will make you a proposition. I want one month's reprieve—one month in which to establish proof that you are not my daughter. In the meantime, you are to remain here, my guest, but are to keep your mouth sealed and your hands literally chained, or in other words, you are not to, in any word, manner or act, let a suspicion escape that you are other than my niece, just over from England. You shall have the hospitality of my home, and I will pay you a hundred dollars, down, now. During the coming month, I will set to work, to establish the proof I want."

"If I prove to you beyond the shadow of a doubt that

you are *not* my daughter, you are to accept five thousand dollars from me and honorably retire from the field, binding yourself never to put forth a claim upon me again. If I fail to establish this proof, within thirty days after to-day, I am to publicly acknowledge you as my daughter, and remove the present Zoe Havens from the position she now occupies. There! you have my only terms—the treaty of a desperate man. Refuse to accept, and I will see that you never go out of this house, except as a corpse. This room is voice-tight, the walls being double and padded. I will murder you, and then—Jake McDowel's devilish plot for gold will be baffled, at least!"

There was a wild, determined gleam in the banker's eyes, as he finished speaking, and a perspiration stood upon his forehead, evidencing how much in earnest he was.

Mabel McDowel heard him through as calmly as though she had been listening to a lecture of no ordinary interest, or a sleepy sermon.

"I will accept!" she said, quietly. "I am satisfied that you can prove nothing, and therefore don't mind giving you a month's breathing spell, during which I can be a lady from England. But if McDowel comes—?"

"I will attend to his case. Have you a photograph of him?"

"No. He never had one taken."

"It matters not. I will have my door servant admit no one of his name."

"That will do. He will probably hunt you up, however, as the ten thousand dollars you gave him as hush-money are exhausted, and he still considers me money to him. Now, if you please, you may show me my fair rival, as I am anxious to view her."

"You shall see her, but, mind you, don't dare to hint a suspicion to her. A purer-hearted girl never lived."

"Oh! no doubt of that!" Miss Mabel McDowel said, with biting sarcasm, as she arose and followed the banker from the room.

After they had been gone from the study, some few moments, the door of a great bookcase swung open, and Sydney Seelyce stepped into the room, a peculiar sinister smile upon his sallow features.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FANGS OF A TRICKSTER.—A CLEVER RUSE.—A DUEL BETWEEN TWO BEAUTIFUL WOMEN.—THE NEW HAVENS CLAIMANT.

Not half an hour after Bonanza Bill and the old hump-back had left the Crimson Palace saloon, George Grafton, undisguised, but armed to the teeth, entered the den.

On glancing around the room, and not seeing Barclay among those gathered there, he uttered a low exclamation of disappointment.

"I thought I should miss him, because of being detained so late at the office," he muttered. "He has probably gone back to the hotel now."

After taking a second glance to reassure himself that Barclay was not there, the detective stood up to the bar, and called for a cigar.

"Didn't see a chap in here awhile ago, dressed in buckskin, fringed with hair did you?" he asked of the bar-tender, as he lighted his cigar.

"Yaas, thar was sech a feller in hyar, I reckon," was the quick reply. "Wore long ha'r—eh?"

"Yes."

"Well he was here, a bit ergo! Dunno whar he went."

"Did he go alone?"

"Waal, I rather guess not; leastwise I see'd him

talkin' with a pilgrim who were made up like a beggar, and I opine they went out purty cluss ter each other."

"Then by Heaven he has been tricked!" Grafton gasped, in under his breath. "Some enemy of his, or perhaps an agent of the accursed League has decoyed him, pretending to be me. But how did the party know of our appointment, or my intention to come disguised? We must have had eavesdroppers, at our interview to-day."

Leaving the saloon, the detective went out upon the street.

He was quite at loss what to do.

Undoubtedly the dashing miner had been decoyed, but to what part of Frisco's great city it was no easy matter to determine.

Hundreds of criminal dens abounded within the city limits, and to any one of these Barclay might have been lured.

"There is work for me now, to find this miner, whom I have joined hands with, as a pard," Grafton muttered, as he pushed along through the dark by-street toward Bush street.

"I must unearth him, be he in the blackest retreat in the city. If he has been captured by Madam Mystery and her gang, I must rescue him. I never went back on a pardner yet, and I reckon I shall not on this dashing miner. First of all, I will visit Wolf's Ranch, and make observations. But, before going, I must disguise myself, and leave a trace behind, so that should I get trapped, there will be no difficulty in determining as to my fate."

Making his way rapidly toward Montgomery street, he soon arrived at his office. Unlocking the door he entered, and then closed it behind him. Lighting the gas, he first seated himself at his desk, with ink, pen, and paper before him, and in a few moments, he framed the following:

"SAN FRANCISCO, TUESDAY.

"DEAR MISS ZOE:

"Since last we met I have had the honor of a call from your estimable father, and am about to assist him, if in my power. I am also going to take hold of another case, and must necessarily venture into the dark haunts of this city. To-night I am going, disguised, into the Chinese district, in search of criminals and criminal evidence. I shall, of course, run some risks, but reckon I can fight my own way. If, however, you do not find me at my office to-morrow morning, you may calculate I am in trouble, and may notify the chief of police. Ever your lover,

"GEORGE GRAFTON."

Inclosing this epistle in a stamped envelope, and addressing it to Miss Havens, the detective stepped from his office, and posted it at a neighboring letter-box. He then returned to his office, and proceeded to attire himself in an entire change of clothing, consisting of rough, dirty home-spun jacket and trousers, heavy stogy boots, and broad slouch hat, that had been liberally perforated with bullets. Upon his face he arranged a sweeping sandy beard and mustache, and also placed a shaggy wig of the same hue upon his head.

A first-class bullwhacker was he, in appearance, and arming himself with a pair of revolvers, he left his office, locking the door behind him, and set out through the blackness of the night for Wolf's notorious retreat in the Chinese quarter.

From his study in the meantime Bernard Havens conducted Mabel McDowel to the parlor upon the first floor.

Here, all in the line of elegant decoration, furniture, and adornment, that a lavish expenditure of money could procure, was on exhibition, and the banker could with pride boast of one of the most magnificent parlors in the Pacific city of Frisco.

Mabel McDowel surveyed the appointments with evident admiration.

"You have a grand place, here, dear uncle," she said, in a mocking tone. "You must be very rich to count your appointments in so expensive a manner."

"Were I poor, I should not have the honor of this visit from you," the banker replied, with sharp sarcasm.

At this moment the door opened, and Zoe entered! She was attired in a rich drawing-room costume, of silk and filmy lace, and in the place of jewels wore a small knot of delicate flowers at her white throat.

She was a rich, quiet picture, of wholesome young womanhood; Mabel McDowel was the contrast that comes from a flashy woman, a bit over-dressed in bad taste. A critic would have selected Zoe at once as the better dressed woman!

"This is Lady McDowel, my niece," the banker said to Zoe. "I hope you will like each other!"

"Is this your daughter, my dear uncle?" Mabel said in pretended amazement. "Why how very plain she is—and so different from what I had expected. Really, my dear uncle, I assure you I am quite amazed."

There was just a tithe of biting irony in her tones, and Zoe felt it keenly, a crimson flush suffusing her forehead.

Bernard Havens frowned.

"You are too critical, my dear Lady Mabel!" he said, reprovingly. "Zoe is plain in dress, from no choice but her own, but in other respects I believe her appearance compares favorably with the prettiest young ladies in Frisco."

"Perhaps, dear uncle; you know the more we see of a person the better grows the impression. Will you come and kiss me, my cousin?"

"If you choose to arise, madam, I will shake hands with you!" Zoe replied, with becoming spirit.

It was now Miss McDowel's turn to flush, and an angry glitter entered her eyes.

It was mortifying to her to have her decided snub thus returned.

"Oh! certainly," she replied, rising and sweeping forward, gracefully. "I expect to make my share of the advances."

The two young women touched hands and then returned to their seats.

Bernard Havens felt compelled to break the silence that ensued.

"I trust you had a pleasant trip across the water, Lady McDowel," he said. "These ocean trips in Autumn are so often fraught with peril as to render that mode of traveling unpleasant."

"Oh! I had a delightful trip all the way from London, here," was the reply. "The ocean was orderly, and the journey across the States has been most pleasant."

Desultory conversation followed, and finally Miss McDowel asked to be shown to her room.

After she had gone, Zoe turned to the banker, with a pale face and great agitation.

"Papa! who is that woman, and what brings her here?"

"She is your—your cousin, my dear, and has come to pay us a visit," the banker lied, not without perceptible agitation.

"No! no! she is not! You are deceiving me by this pretense! I am well satisfied that she is no way related to us. You never mentioned the name of McDowel in my presence, and I know this woman is not what you would have me believe. Tell me, truthfully, why is she here?"

"I cannot!" Bernard Havens said, shaking his head. "I have told you all I can, at present. She is come here, and you must treat her respectfully. Ere long, perhaps, I can explain all to your satisfaction."

"Tell me, now—I must know. Can you have any secrets from me?"

"I cannot tell you," the banker replied firmly. "I have a secret, and it is necessary that you should not know its import at present. Be a good girl now, and do not seek that which would only make you miserable to know. All in due time you shall know, when the threatening cloud that now menaces us has blown over. It may not be wrong, however, for me to tell you that the woman is my foe, but I must hide my enmity under a cloak of hypocrisy. There, now, run away, and be a good girl, and be as you have always been, my trusting, loving daughter."

And, kissing her gently upon the forehead, the banker left the parlor and ascended to his study. On entering, he found Sidney Seelyce comfortably seated in an arm-chair, with his heels elevated at a dangerous angle, upon the nearest desk, while he puffed demurely at a fragrant cigar.

The banker frowned as he saw him, but refrained from speaking his surprise at finding his step-son in his private office, a place which he held sacred to his business relations.

Of late Seelyce had manifested more than usual assurance, and had taken greater liberty both in word and action, and this the banker had noticed, but had said nothing. At the death of his second wife, he had promised her that he would offer Sydney a home as long as he should behave himself as a gentleman, and he had kept his promise—more, had on more than one occasion loaned him money in considerable sums, which the dutiful step-son had in each case forgotten to pay back.

"Good-evening, daddy," Seelyce said, as the banker entered; "excuse my intrusion here, but you see I've been spooking around in your library for a good book to read, and failing to find one, I next espied a box of cigars, and thought I'd smoke. I see you have lady visitors."

"Yes—Lady McDowel, from London," Havens briefly replied, as he seated himself at his desk.

"Alias Miss Zoe Havens, the new claimant for the Havens' inheritance," Seelyce observed, coolly.

The banker started, and whitened.

"What do you know about that?" he gasped.

"Oh, I know a considerable," the dutiful step-son replied, triumphantly. "I chanced to be in this room during your interview with her, to-day. Hearing your approach, and the sound of an unfamiliar female voice, I naturally felt timid, and secreted myself in yonder capacious bookcase. Therefore, you perceive, I was forced to be an unwilling eavesdropper."

"Confound you, what business here, in the first place? Now, the devil's to pay!" the banker growled.

"No, I wouldn't pay the devil anything, as he isn't in the case," Seelyce laughed, coolly. "What spare cash you have to dispense with you can give to me."

"Then you think I will buy your silence?" Havens demanded, his brow growing dark with rising anger.

"Oh! yes. I am confident that you will come down, right handsomely. You can afford to do so, rather than to have me go unburden myself to Miss Zoe."

"Would you be so ungrateful, after all I have done for you?"

"Oh, certainly. You see, it is not often that one gains an advantage in this world, and once gained, he is the fool who does not hang on to it. Besides, my dear daddy, I have another trifling claim upon you—bought it of a drunken miner a few nights ago, or, rather, won it, at a game of cards."

"A claim, sir—what do you mean?"

"A note, drawn by you in favor of John Shields, miner, for \$5,000, and by him transferred to me!" Seelyce replied, coolly. "But you needn't fret about it, you know, for I shall not push the matter, but reserve the note until it has accrued some interest."

Bernard Havens regarded his scheming step-son with a gaze that made him wince.

"Seelyce, you are as big a villain at heart as lives, and I shall henceforth regard you as such. I will not ask to see the forgery, as I have no doubt that you hold it. There are other men that hold them. How you came into possession of it, I do not know, but I have no doubt that you are in league with the gang of desperadoes who are shoving out these forgeries upon the market."

"Many thanks, dear daddy, for your complimentary opinion of me, but you see I make all allowances for the words uttered in a moment of anger. By the way, dropping the note matter, which can be handled at another time, what do you propose doing in the other case?"

"Nothing, sir—nothing. If you dare to breathe a word of what you have heard I will kick you from my house, and order my doors closed against you. You have your choice, sir."

"Oh!" Seelyce said, articulating the word significantly. "Well, you and I can hardly afford to be at sword's points, so, probably, I shall maintain a close-mouthed silence, unless—well, I'll sleep over it, and see what my conclusion is to-morrow. Don't worry, however, about the note, as it will not come due in several years yet—and, if I should get Zoe, you see, it would be all in the family."

And with a cool laugh, the sallow-faced, effeminate step-son took his hat and left the room.

"Yes! yes! when you *do* get Zoe, it *will* be all in the family," Havens muttered, after he had gone. "I have had my eyes opened to your defects, my fine fellow, and I had as lief fight you as the other rascals who are besieging me. Ah! Heaven, how long will I be able to hold out against the overwhelming odds?"

CHAPTER IX.

ZOE HAVENS IS WRETCHED.—SHE HEARS THE SECRET.—
THE FLIGHT OF A DESPERATE GIRL.

Zoe Havens passed a most wretchedly miserable night. When in her bed she lay and thought over the situation, and the result was a copious outburst of tears—tears prompted more by anxiety for her father, than fears for herself.

Never before, to her knowledge, had he withheld from her any of his secrets, but had always made her his confidante and counsel, seeming to put much reliance in her woman's judgment.

But there had come a change, now. It needed no sec-

ond suggestion to convince her of that. In addition to his other troubles, her father was carrying a secret concerning the strange young woman whom he had brought home with him.

A secret it was, and Zoe felt sure that it was a great one, or he would not keep it from her. In vain she tried to arrive at a correct conclusion of what hold this insolent stranger held upon her father, though she puzzled her pretty head until it ached.

The worry over the matter precluded all possibility of sleep, until a late hour; consequently Zoe did not arise until time for breakfast.

On descending to the parlor, she found the bogus Lady Mabel in the act of finishing reading a letter, and inclosing it in an envelope.

"Excuse me, my dear cousin," the claimant said, laying the missive down upon the marble table, "for, in assorting the mail, a moment ago, to see if there was any mail for me, I opened one of your letters, by mistake. No offense, I hope, as I did not read it."

Zoe seized the letter, with flashing eyes.

"You have little to do, madam!" she said, coldly. "You will please be careful not to make such mistakes in the future!"

"Of course not, dear cousin. It was a mere accident. You will excuse me, as I have some business to attend to, in town, to-day."

"Oh! certainly—with pleasure!" was Zoe's stinging reply.

After the Lady Mabel had swept from the room, Zoe examined her letter. It was the same that George Grafton had penned on the previous evening, and the banker's daughter read it with cheeks flushing with pleasure.

"Poor George! what may not become of him, in that ruffianly district? I would that I were with him, to share his perils and his triumphs," she murmured, as she pressed the letter to her lips. "George will help poor papa out of his embarrassment, I am almost sure. And then——"

A soft blush came upon her face, as she turned and seated herself at a piano, and ran her fingers over the keys.

"A wedding march would be an appropriate taste with your thoughts, fair sister," a cynical voice said, and Sydney Seelyce stepped from a curtained alcove, with his usual cat-like tread.

Zoe turned upon him with a start.

"You are ever lurking where you can overhear what concerns you not, sir!" she said, haughtily.

"Oh! you do me an injustice, now, by saying that, my dear. I happened to be in there watching the people go by this most pleasant morning, being too deuced lazy to crawl out myself. But, Zoe, my girl, you do not seem in the least disturbed by the—the—well—the situation of affairs?"

"I do not understand you, Sydney Seelyce; what do you mean?"

"Ah! then our model papa has not apprised you of the existing state of affairs, eh?"

"He has told me nothing, sir!" the banker's daughter replied, with quivering lip.

"That is wrong. He should have told you, first. But I suppose he wanted to keep the trouble from you as long as possible."

"Tell me what you mean—what this trouble is—what the secret is between my father and the stranger he brought here last night? Tell me, Sydney Seelyce, for the love of heaven!"

"On one condition, Miss Zoe. Soon you will be cast upon the world, penniless and friendless, and will need a strong arm to protect you. I will not ask you to marry me yet—I simply ask your true friendship. Grant me that, and I will tell you what brings Mabel McDowell!"

"Sydney Seelyce, when you prove beyond a doubt that you are an earnest and unselfish friend, you shall have my friendship, and not until then!" Zoe replied, haughtily.

"Then I will already consider myself in your respect, for I shall prove to you that I am your friend, and the only one you have in San Francisco. The information I am about to give you will doubtless astonish you, but it is probably true, nevertheless. You are not Bernard Havens's daughter!"

"Not his daughter?"

Zoe had arisen, but she now reeled back aghast, and clutched a chair for support, her face grown as white as alabaster.

"Not his daughter, Sydney Seelyce? What do you mean?"

"Precisely what I said—that you are not Bernard Havens's daughter. This Mabel McDowell has come here, claiming to have proofs to the effect that she, instead of you, rightfully holds that position. Years ago, it seems, when your father reigned at Havens Heath, and when you were an infant, an English rascal, named McDowell, made a change of children, by abducting Havens's own child, and placing his in its place, there being at the time a decided resemblance between the babes.

"Years ago, this McDowell wrote and explained the case to Bernard Havens, and threatened to put forward the rightful claimant for the Havens inheritance. My dutiful step-dad was of course strong in his belief, despite McDowell's evidence, that you were his own child, and to avoid a sensation, and to avert a family disgrace, he forwarded McDowell sufficient hush-money to silence him for a stated term of years, which have now expired, and Miss Mabel McDowell has come forward to take her position as the real Zoe Havens. To save you from the knowledge of your fall, however, Havens arranged with the McDowell to keep still for a month, by appearing as his niece, during which time he intends to arrange, benevolently, for your future welfare, I believe. That is the long and short of the matter, and my sympathy was so great for you that I could not avoid telling you, although Havens attempted to bribe me into silence!"

Zoe stood like a rigid statue, with colorless face and wild eyes, and heard him through, word for word. Then, a low moan escaped her—she sunk upon the chair, and pillowed her face upon her arm, as it rested on the chair back.

For several minutes Seelyce saw her form tremble and quiver with emotion, but when she finally raised her head, her eyes were tearless.

"Then, if what you say is true, I am occupying a false position?" she said, with a wonderful calmness, born of a courageous, proud nature.

"It would seem so," Seelyce replied. "But, there is one chance in a thousand for you yet, as Havens has a month in which he will attempt to prove that the McDowell claimant has no right to the position."

"You do not for a moment suppose that he will succeed, do you?"

"Candidly, I have no hopes in that direction. McDowell is ready to swear to the kidnapping and exchange, and a court would recognize you as not Havens's child or heir,

and Havens having no rebutting evidence to offer, Mabel McDowel would no doubt win the day."

"The case shall not be contested," Zoe said, calmly. "I thank you, Mr. Seelyice, for what you have told me, until you are better paid."

Then turning, she swept from the room.

Seelyice gazed after her, with a gloating expression in his eyes.

"By St. Christopher! I'd give my soul to possess that grand girl! She is such a woman as would change a devil into a saint. I *must* scheme to obtain her. I think I have taken an initial step in the right direction. She will not remain here—her proud spirit will start her out upon the world. My plan will then be to keep track of her until I find her in desperate need, and then urge my case until I win her. And as for the Havens inheritance—well, we shall see. Perhaps I may have a finger in that pie, if things work right."

Seelyice had not guessed wrongly when he concluded that Zoe would leave the banker's house, after what she had heard.

She was a brave, courageous girl, but too independent to live upon the bounty of any one upon whom she had no natural claim. She knew how to work, and it was with the deliberately formed resolve to leave Bernard Havens's house, and seek her own living in the world, that she left Seelyice, and ascended to her own rooms.

She was perfectly calm, despite her new determination.

To be sure, she was not aware just how she was going to turn, but with a brave heart, she felt that she could get a living by work, and even a meager existence, now would be preferable to be a dependent upon the bounty of Bernard Havens.

Seating herself at a small writing-desk, she took forth ink, pen and paper, and wrote in a pretty hand, the letter as follows:

"DEAR PAPA: By the time you receive this, I shall be an absentee from your household. A revelation has come to me that I have been occupying a false position here, and as I do not wish to usurp another's right, I make room, cheerfully, with a blessing upon your head for your kind care and protection of me in the past. Do not worry about me—I am young and strong, and have abundant faith that I can care for myself, with God's aid. You did wrong to keep the real Zoe Havens thus long out of her rightful position, and I hope she may be blessed with your fatherly interest, as I have always been.

"Forget me, in the love of the other."

"ZOE."

That was all, but it seemed to satisfy her, for she inclosed it in an envelope, and took it to the banker's office, where she left it. Then, donning her wraps, and taking her purse, she left the Havens mansion for the pitiless streets of San Francisco!

CHAPTER X.

AN OLD FOOL IN LOVE.—MISS STURDEVANT, THE BEAUTIFUL.
—THE MONEY-BAGS OF THE BANKER AGAINST
A MAN'S LOVE.

About the same hour that Zoe set out upon the streets, Bernard Havens left his banking establishment, and hailing a cab, he entered, and was whirled rapidly away into one of the most aristocratic avenues of the city. After a short ride he was dropped in front of a handsome stone residence, and mounting the steps, he rang the bell.

A servant soon appeared and showed him into an elegantly appointed reception room; then taking his card, disappeared.

He soon reappeared, however, and the banker was shown to a modest private parlor upon the second floor.

There were no occupants when the banker entered, but he had seen seated but a few minutes, when a lady entered from an adjoining room—a woman of the most commanding beauty of face and form, attired in an elegant costume of gray silk, trimmed with the most costly of imported laces. A woman of not over two and twenty years of age, stately of figure and fair of face, with marvelously pretty features, a pleasant pair of brown eyes, and a great profusion of golden hair, stylishly arranged—a woman whose throat was encircled by a necklace of diamonds, and who also wore these valuable jewels upon her fingers, and in her hair.

Bernard Havens arose from his chair, and greeted her warmly.

"Miss Sturdevant, you are looking your best, to-day," he said, as he resumed his seat, "and your fascinating appearance bids me hope that the important answer I came for is to be favorable."

The beautiful woman smiled, winningly, at his speech.

"I am glad if my appearance pleases you, Mr. Havens," she said. "I like to be fair, in your eyes, you know. What very pleasant days we are having now."

"Very true; the weather is most desirable. But laying aside the ordinary topics, permit me to exhibit a little lovelly impatience, my dear, and beg you to let me know my fate. Suspense is what drives a man frantic!"

"Then you should never court that dangerous condition," Miss Sturdevant replied, with a musical laugh. "As to my answer, dear Mr. Havens, I must disappoint you, I fear, as I really cannot decide at present. When I bade you come to-day for a reply to your highly flattering proposal, I supposed I should be ready to make a decision in your favor, but I have been so busy since then that I could scarcely give a thought to your case."

"But—but this is twice you have fooled me in this way, Lucille. How am I to know that I will ever get an answer?" the banker protested, evidently anything but pleased with the disappointment.

"Oh! by faith, of course. Faith and perseverance you know, win the crown."

"But, why can you not decide now as well as later? I am very wealthy and can offer you a magnificent home, the company of myself and a charming daughter, and better than all, even a better grade of society than you now enjoy. What else can you want, more than this, except the love of a warm-hearted man, which I have already cast at your feet."

"I want time to reflect and consider, sir. A woman has much to take into consideration, before accepting a proposal of marriage, and, although I love you, Bernard, and shall probably eventually marry you, I could not think of promising you, without mature deliberation. Your riches, I may add, are only a secondary consideration, as I have considerable wealth of my own."

"Then you will give me no definite answer?"

"Not now, Mr. Havens. At another time I may, and when you get the answer it will probably be an encouraging one. Until that time take hope from the knowledge that I love you."

"I will endeavor to do so. But there is one question I would ask. What is my step-son to you? I saw you talking to him, a few days ago, as I passed by. You were standing on the steps."

"Oh! Sydney has been a devoted suitor for my hand, for a long time, but, poor fellow, I never can give him the least encouragement. So you have no cause to be jealous, Mr. Havens."

And so the banker took his departure, fully satisfied that she was an angel, although rather a provoking one. He had fallen in love with her at first sight, and for several months past had courted her, unknown to Zoe, with the view of taking her home as his bride.

And the woman?

A silvery sarcastic laugh escaped her pretty, tempting lips, after the banker was safely out of hearing.

"The poor fool!" she said, rising and surveying her beautiful self in the great pier-glass that ornamented one end of the room; "as if I could love him, an old man, while I am so young and beautiful! To be sure I might be tempted to marry him, but it would only be for the sake of fingering his money-bags, already too full to hold all his wealth. Ha! ha! perhaps I shall marry him yet, and then desert him after awhile for my darling Sydney. Ah! he is the one I love—the only one who ever thrilled me by touch, word, or action. Rich, reckless, beautiful though I am, with the power of *bleeding the world*, I would marry Sydney Seelyce, to-day, were he to make me an offer."

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE DEN OF THE LEAGUE OF TWELVE IN CHINATOWN.—
THE TAINT OF THE OLD OUTLAW.—MADAM MYSTERY.

It must not be supposed that the notorious, dangerous Chinese quarter of San Francisco, is made up wholly of small and filthy buildings!

Indeed there are some pretentious brick and stone structures in the quarter that rival those in the other parts of the city, and these are mainly occupied by a class of the Chinese who have set themselves above their brethren on account of having gathered around them a greater amount of golden shekels.

It was to one of these mansions that the hump-back led the way and Bonanza Bill followed. Not a suspicion had entered his mind that all was not right, or that he was not following George Grafton, until he had followed the dwarf into the hall of the big mansion, and heard the door swing shut, with a click. Then he beheld the hump-back confronting him with leveled revolver.

"You are my prisoner, William Barclay," a feminine voice announced. "You refused to leave the town, as ordered by the Madam, and I was sent to decoy you hither. You stand now in the retreat of the League of Twelve."

Bill gave a low whistle of surprise.

"And, you ain't George Grafton at all?" he interrogated, grimly.

"Of course not," the decoy declared, with a musical laugh. "I am one of the League of Twelve. I have brought you here in order that Madam Mystery can talk turkey to you."

"Blame it, then show me this wonderful madam," Bill said, undauntedly. "She's the very old heifer I want to see, and all the other old maids, too."

"Ha! ha! out of the whole twelve, pardner, you would only find three pretty women—that is, Madam Mystery, Edna Earle, and myself."

"Oh! you're pretty, then, with that disguise off?"

"Just a little, they say."

"Where is this Edna Earle?"

"She has been absent several days."

"Well, then, take me to Madam Mystery, for I want to see her. When she gits thru with me, I want to see you ag'in, and have a chat with you."

The decoy bowed, and led the way up the richly carpeted staircase into another grandly frescoed hall, and along that until they came to a pair of folding doors, which she pushed open, and entered a magnificently furnished library, containing case after case of books, magazines and newspapers.

Pushing Bonanza Bill into this apartment, the hump-back quickly retired, closing the door behind her.

Standing in the center of the room, with his hands thrust in his pockets, the miner-sharp from the Leopard Lode, proceeded to observe his surroundings with the coolest indifference.

After taking in the general appointments of the room, he turned and nodded to a masked woman who had just entered—a handsomely-formed creature, attired in a stylish suit of corn-colored silk, trimmed with lace, and having a great train; with diamonds upon her fingers, at her throat, and upon her hair, which was abundant, golden-hued, and prettily arranged.

The mask she wore only covered her eyes, and Barclay could see that she was wondrously pretty of face, as well as of form.

"Good-mornin', ma'am," he said, doffing his hat, with a twitch. "I reckon mebber you're the one they call Madam Mystery?"

"I am, indeed, Madam Mystery. And who are you?" the woman demanded, pausing a few feet from him, and surveying him critically.

"Well, I reckon I'm registered as Bonanza Bill Barclay, when I'm to home," the miner answered. "They sed as how you wanted to tork turkey to me, an' so I waltzed over to see ye."

"If you are Bill Barclay, you are indeed the man I wish to see," Madam Mystery said, bowing. "Pray be seated."

She wheeled forward two easy-chairs, and motioned Barclay to occupy the one, while she took possession of the other.

"Will you have some wine with me, before we converse?" the Queen of the Twelve asked.

"No, ma'am; I rather reckon not," Bill replied, firmly. "I don't indulge, since a year ago, when one of your tools fleeced me out of some valuable possessions, while I was drunk."

The Madam laughed.

"Ha! ha! one little loss should not discourage you. However, I will not ask you to drink. It is of that matter of one year ago that I would speak. It seems that you have surmised that Edna Earle was a member of my band, and now you have joined hands with George Grafton, detective, in an effort to find and break up the League of Twelve. Tell me your object in this move."

"Humph! need you ask? My motive is that of an honest man, who would see crime and rascality eternally wiped out."

"But you have never suffered at the hands of the league?"

"You lie! The woman, Edna Earle, robbed me of gold, and of papers that were very valuable only to me!"

"Ah! yes. I remember now that she handed me a bundle of papers, and I put them away in my safe, where they have remained since. As to the money I never saw any."

"Then, she kept it herself. But that is only a second-

any consideration. The papers I want more than aught else."

"I presume so, and undoubtedly we can make arrangements for their delivery. But, first, tell me, how you came to know aught of the League of Twelve?"

Barclay reflected a moment.

"I don't know as there will be any harm in tellin' you," he said, after a moment. "I found an old coffin in the cellar where the Diamond Queen left me, one year ago. On opening it, I discovered a skeleton, and also a document, purporting to have been written by Jarecki Armstrong, an old outlaw, who had been engaged in every phase of crime. The document also told of his last scheme, being the organization of the League of Twelve, with you the Queen."

"I knew nothing of the existence of such a document, or it should have been destroyed!" Madam Mystery said, earnestly. "Jarecki Armstrong was my husband. I married him upon his death-bed."

"You must have thought a heap of his cadaver!" Barclay declared, "to have chucked it away in a cellar."

"That was his request. He had a mortal fear of becoming the prey of a college dissection-room. Therefore he was laid away in the cellar until time should efface all memory of his past existence. These noted criminals have a great horror of being torn to pieces by curious physicians. This document, Mr. Barclay, you must deliver into my custody."

"Oh! I must, eh?" the miner exclaimed.

"Well, if you can find it about my person, you are welcome to it."

"What! did you not bring it with you?"

"I rather opine not. A treasure like that is worthy of preservation."

"And you intend to use it against the League, do you?"

"That depends somewhat upon circumstances. If I am allowed my freedom, I shall, undoubtedly. If I am not allowed my freedom, the paper is in safe hands."

An exclamation of vexation escaped the beauty.

"See here, you must not be my enemy. You can ill-afford to be that. You are the same as a prisoner in this house. Try though you may, you can never escape, against my will. If you would go free, you will do well to make terms, with me. Do you want to look upon my face?"

"Well, I don't know that I have any objections to that," the miner replied, coolly. "If you are handsome, I presume I should enjoy the view!"

Madam Mystery showed her pearly teeth in a pretty smile, and removed her mask.

Bill Barclay uttered an exclamation of admiration, and the Madam smiled again.

"Am I not pretty? How like you the picture?"

"You're the prettiest woman I ever gazed upon—and, yet, a very rascal!" he said, in his off-hand way.

"I thought my appearance would please you," she said, quietly. "No man has ever looked upon my face, of late, who has not admired it. I am young, talented, handsome, rich. *How would you like to own me as a wife?*"

Barclay gave vent to a second whistle of surprise. This was rushing matters in a way entirely new to him.

"Well, I don't know about that," he replied. "If you were not a notorious criminal, and I were in the matrimonial line, I opine I might like to hitch on. But, you see, I ain't taking on any incumbrances, just at present."

"Pshaw! If I chose, I could soon twist you out of that notion. But to talk business, I will tell you what I'll do. Though young in years, I am a thoroughly schooled

woman of the world. Thus far in life I have never permitted obstacles to stand in the way of my ambition, or my schemes. A week from hence the League of Twelve merges into a league of the United States. In every city of the said States will a member of the league be posted, and while all human crimes will be left out, the business of forgery will be adhered to, and perhaps counterfeiting. Both men and women will belong to the league, and I shall still continue its president. My reputation extends no further than this city—you and George Grafton hold the only knowledge against me and the league. My agents have been at work for a year in making preparations for the perfection of this great scheme. Every member has been selected from rich and trusted circles, which doubly insures the safety and success of the great order. And now I intend to buy you and the detective, Grafton, body and soul, or else silence you so that you will never be able to betray us!"

The scheming Madam had delivered her speech with the utmost coolness, and now paused to replace her mask, and note the effect upon the miner.

Barclay certainly was astonished. Such a scheme was too great for him to comprehend, especially when conceived by a woman. It was worthy of the inventive powers of the oldest and most experienced rascal in the world.

"You are a devil!" he declared. "No ordinary being could ever imagine such a thing, much less put it into execution. You pass my comprehension, entirely. As to the matter of your buying me, it would take more money than you can raise!"

"I doubt that, sir. I can raise more money than you suppose. When Captain Jarecki died, he gave me the whole of his fortune amounting to many thousand dollars. Besides this I have made doubly as many more, by my pen, and to-day, if in need of five thousand dollars, all I have to do is to sit down, and write a note for the amount and get it cashed. Now, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you ten thousand dollars out of my own pocket to become a member of the new league and work faithfully with me, in the interests of that order—five thousand dollars to marry me and be a faithful husband to me—ten thousand more and the papers that were stolen from you, to either induce George Grafton to join the league, or to put him out of the way—in all twenty-five thousand dollars, which is a bigger fortune than you can probably accumulate in a lifetime—or, I will give you twenty thousand dollars to leave this country forever, and never betray the secrets that have come into your possession. Which proposition will you accept?"

"Neither!" Bonanza Bill replied firmly. "As I told you before, you cannot buy me; nor can you make terms with me, in any way or manner—not for a fortune. My name is Bill Barclay, an' when I make up my mind to a thing, you can't move me, no more than you can move a range of the Sierras."

"Then your doom is sealed. You shall never leave this place alive. I have offered you every proposition that was tempting, and now if you refuse, you have brought a fate upon yourself."

And rising, the Female Forger touched a bell; the door opened, admitting a half-dozen masked persons in men's garb, but who were in reality women. They were armed with revolvers, and the moment they entered, they covered Bonanza Bill.

"Take this man away, and incarcerate him in the dungeon!" Madam Mystery commanded, sternly. "Let

him be chained to prevent all possibility of escape, and fed twice a day on bread and water!"

The band of masked tools advanced, and threw themselves upon the miner, and though he struggled they were too much for him; he was finally overpowered and his hands secured behind him. Then at a motion from the Female Forger, they led him from the room, and down the stairs to the second floor; thence through the lower hall and through a series of elegantly furnished rooms, until they arrived in a small room in the rear, barren of furniture or ornaments. Here they formed in a circle, and pushed the miner into the center of the circle. One of the masked outlaws stepped beside him. Suddenly a section of the floor began to sink, and the twain gradually disappeared below the floor.

Down—down they went out of sight; down—down into the depths of the earth below that palace of crime, in the Chinese district.

Barclay, with his arms pinioned, could in no way or manner resist. He was helpless in the power of the criminal league of the Pacific city, and all he could do was to remain inactive, and suffer himself to be borne down into the earth, he knew not how far.

As they descended, they were in Stygian darkness, but he concluded by the closeness of the air that they were descending into a pit, or sort of well.

Down, down they went, slowly, but still down, until at last the platform on which they stood grated upon a bottom. Then he heard his masked companion fumbling about, and finally she struck a match, and lit a candle in a niche in the rocky wall that surrounded them. By the light diffused he was able to look around him.

The passageway through which they descended was an immense well, probably very, very deep, and the sides were very steep. At the bottom, where they had halted, a grated iron door opened into the wall, and with a huge iron key his companion unlocked and opened this and motioned him to enter.

Knowing no better way than to obey, he entered, and she stepped after him to the threshold.

"Fear not, Mr. Barclay," she said, in a musical voice that he thought he had heard before. "Although your prospects may appear anything but charming, they are not to be quite so bad as they may seem. I will see you again, when I am not watched."

"Who are you?" he demanded, in surprise.

"The same member who decoyed you. My name is Rose Lawton. Be of brave heart now, until you see me again."

Then she closed the door, and locked it from the outside, and a moment later he heard the platform glide rapidly upward.

"But for that woman I am liable to rot in this damp dungeon," the miner muttered. "Will she come again, and will her coming do me any particular good? God grant it may be so, for my only hope is now centered in her!"

CHAPTER XII.

IN TIGHT QUARTERS.—BLACK JAKE M'DOWEL.—BRANDED AS A FRAUD.—A DETECTIVE'S FLIGHT.

One week later.

A short period of time in a great bustling ever-moving city like Frisco; yet some old philosopher has characteristically remarked that a world can be built in a week, with one day to spare, so that one need not remark at great changes in a week's time.

During this elapse, George Grafton had thoroughly ransacked the more important dens in the Chinese district, but without success in his mission.

Nowhere could he strike the trail of the missing miner; nowhere could he learn any tidings of him. He had completely dropped out of the world, as it were, and the detective finally gave up all hope of finding him.

Still something caused him to haunt the Chinese district. He was watching for some clew that might lead to his gaining knowledge concerning the League of Twelve, in whose custody he had no doubt Bonanza Bill was held.

As sharp of eye as a lynx, and as patient as a cat on the watch for its prey, the detective waited and watched, spending the larger share of his time at the vile haunt known as the Wolf's Ranch.

A clever actor he was in addition to his other gifts, and he sustained his character of Sandy Morse so cleverly that his disguise was never suspected.

Wolf's Ranch was situated upon a wretched street, in a wretched part of the Chinese section, and was a one-storied building of considerable width and length, but dingy and smoky in appearance.

Inside the condition was not much better. The building was partitioned off into four rooms, the first, on entering, containing the bar, the second was devoted to gambling, and the third was a lunch room. The last, consequently, was a kitchen.

The walls of all these apartments were soiled and smoked, and everywhere were the dents of bullet-holes and suspicious stains, which told of many a bloody brawl.

Here, at this den, nightly—and daily, for that matter—congregated scores of the worst characters in the city of San Francisco—men who had figured in every phase of terrible crime—men who rob for money—men who murdered, for money; gamblers, bruisers, villains and ruffians, at large, whose vile natures were mirrored in their dark sinister faces.

No saintly crowd for an honest man to go among, as well may be guessed, and yet, in his disguise of the bullwhacker, George Grafton boldly entered into this den of danger, and mingled with its inmates.

No man was he to hesitate because danger lay in his path. He pushed ahead first and considered the danger afterward.

The evening one week from the night he had set out in search of Barclay, found him lounging in the gambling room of Wolf's Ranch, pretending to watch the various games, but in reality using his eyes for a different purpose.

The Ranch was well filled with its customary habitués, and a hubbub of noises prevailed that was at times nearly deafening. Some were drunk and noisy; others were quarreling over the games, and knock-downs were of frequent occurrence. As he stood leaning against a cigar counter, viewing the disorderly scene, Grafton wondered how many of the respectable citizens of San Francisco knew of the existence of such a den, and if they did know, how many of them cared?

Probably not a great number.

Very little concerning this Chinese quarter did they know or care to know, and the detective voted it a discredit to the authorities who held the managerial reins of the city, that they did not clean out the vile section, and rid it of its nest of criminals.

Among the motley gang collected to-night, noticeable

for his boisterousness and quarrelsome disposition, was a strapping fellow from the mines, dirty and slouchy of dress, and dark and evil of countenance—his face with its rough stubble of black beard and its gleaming bloodshot eyes, being very sinister and repulsive to gaze upon.

He was armed with a beltful of weapons, and the way in which he waltzed about the saloon seemed to indicate that he was full of "pizen," and ripe for a brawl with any one that came along.

Several times he had attempted to pick a quarrel with various ones, but they were evidently not desirous of tackling him, and passed over the insults as good-naturedly as possible.

Upon the opposite side of the room from where Grafton was lounging a new-comer had stationed himself—a medium-sized individual, arrayed in a full suit of black broadcloth, and wearing a black mask over the upper portion of his features, where it was met by a stylish silk hat. The lower portion of his face which was visible, was of an olive hue, and a heavy, pointed black mustache adorned his lip.

His hands were gloved with kids of a hue corresponding with the remainder of his make-up, and he carried a stout rosewood cane.

Between this dark stranger and the noisy rough, who frequently vouchsafed the information to the crowd that his cognomen was Black Jake, Grafton alternated his gaze. He could not have told just why, but these two persons, in particular, impressed him strangely.

The black stranger was not the only masked person in the room, as many of those assembled wore full or half masks. This, Grafton concluded, was so that in case of a raid upon the den, they would not be recognized. Others were there, so reckless as to have no fear of the consequences, be what they might.

Black Jake continued to prance about in a promiscuous manner, pausing at the bar in the saloon, occasionally, to further test his storage capacity for liquid lightning.

Suddenly, during one of his perambulations through the gaming-room, he seemed to have, for the first time, spied Grafton. A moment he paused and glared at him with his evil, swollen eyes; then he approached with broad strides.

"See hyar! cuss my eyes ef I don't b'lieve I know you, old hoss!" he cried, thrusting out a horny hand. "You're old Jim Lufkins, frum up in ther Yuba dees-trict?"

"I rather reckon not, stranger," Grafton replied, not offering to take the proffered hand. "You have made a mistake."

"Oh! I hev, hev I? Mebbe I lie, then!" the ruffian cried, insolently. "See heer, my man, et strikes me ye ain't ther c'ar quill. I'm Black Jake McDowel, I am, an' I've got on a big load o' benzeen, too, but I ain't no fool, fer all thet. Thet eddicated langwage o' yourn don't hang along wi' thet rough make-up, no-how, an' I'll allow ye're a cussed fraud!"

Grafton scowled—not so much because of his anger toward the miner, but because he had unwittingly committed himself.

Previously he had strictly adhered to the rude language peculiar to the "citizens" of the mines, and he now saw that he had made a big mistake, noticeable even to the half-drunken ruffian.

It was a thing he had never done before, in his experience as a detective.

"I say yure a durned fraud!" McDowel again cried, after waiting a moment for Grafton to reply, "an ef ye want ter take et up, jest tread on my toes, and I'll pounce onter ye and yank ther starch outen you quicker'n a cat can chaw mice. That's the style of a hairpin I am!"

"I'd advise you to go along erbout yer bizness, pard!" Grafton replied, coolly. "I ain't owin' ye nothin', I allow, an' ye'll find et yer best plan ter git right up an' git, afore ye suddenly git hurt."

"Oh! ho! afore I git hurt, eh? Who in thunder's goin' ter hurt me? Nary a man, ye redhaired galoot. Thar ain't a person as kin tech one side o' me, I ruther allow. McDowel is my name, an' I've licked ther pick o' ev'ry town from Denver ter Frisco, I hev, an' don't ye fergit it. Oh! I'm a hull circus an' part o' a caryvan, ye miserable rooster; an' mebbe I don't look like a full-blooded fightin' cock, but I dast declare an' asseverate thet I can maul thunder out of ary man in Frisco!"

And to add emphasis to his declaration, the tough brought his hand down with no slight force upon Grafton's shoulder.

The next instant the detective had hurled him back in no gentle manner, and drawn and cocked a revolver.

"Now you keep off" he cried, sternly, "or I'll riddle you. If you think to pick on me, you've struck the wrong man, and it won't take only about one ounce of lead, well sent, to lay you out!"

McDowel growled savagely.

"Cuss ye!" he gritted, fiercely. "So ye're ready wi' yer tools, eh? I know'd ye was a cowardly shyster, fer no brave pilgrim ever pulls a popgun, when he kin use his fists to settle a funeral with. Hello! wake up, boys, an' lookee heer. I've cornered a ginnywine pestilence here—an' p'raps cotched a polecat! Who knows?"

The gamblers began to grow curious, and one by one a crowd collected.

"What ye up to?" one of the ringleaders demanded, gruffly. "Why don't ye let ther feller alone, Jake?"

"'Cause I don't want ter!" McDowel declared.

"I reckon, boys, thet we'se all a band o' brethern hyar, an' it's fer our interest to luk out thet we don't git spotted by ther p'leece an' detectives. Now, 'twixt you an' me, feller-citizens, I allow I reckon this consarned galoot hain't w'ot he seems, an' I'm fer makin' him show his true colors!"

A murmur of approval went the round of the crowd.

"On course," the ringleader assented. "Ef ther chap as calls hisself Sandy Morse ain't ther pure quill, we don't want him heer. Come! old hoss, show up, now, whether ye're true ter natur' or aire disguised!"

"I'll show nothing!" George replied, seeing that he must face the music. "I warn you to keep off from the start. My name is George Grafton, and I am a detective. I came here to mind my own business, and you will do well to mind yours. If you don't and attempt to disturb me, I'll bet a gold eagle some of you will bite the dust before I give up!"

CHAPTER XIII.

ZOE HAVENS' DISAPPEARANCE.—WHOSE CHILD IS THE MISSING GIRL.—MABEL M'DOWEL RULES THE BANKER'S HOME.

The disappearance of Zoe Havens was not known outside of the family circle, although it had been nearly a week since she had left.

Bernard Havens had found her letter on his return from his visit to Miss Sturdevant, and although he was deeply grieved, he made no attempt to find her, believing it not his best policy to discover and bring her back, until he should have proven her right in the family as his daughter.

In the interim, Mabel McDowel had presided in Zoe's place.

But by no means had she aptly filled it.

She sat in the grand parlor and read, or went shopping the whole of her time during each day, where Zoe had busied herself in the supervision of the household, and at night she was absent until twelve o'clock, and often later, but where at, the banker could not ascertain.

She treated him often with sarcastic contempt, and even rudeness, but he bore this treatment without remark, resolved to put up with it until he should know for certain whether she was his own child or not.

And when should he know, this?

It was a conundrum he could not solve, nor could he see any future hope of its solution.

Seelyce, too, was overbearing and insulting, and although the banker accused him of informing Zoe, he bravely denied it.

He did not seem to take much of a liking to the new claimant, and they scarcely ever spoke together.

Seelyce was not idle.

He had himself lost track of Zoe's whereabouts, and daily took a stroll about the city, and its shops and stores, in hope of stumbling across her, but his efforts were unsuccessful.

On the evening of the sixth day after Zoe's departure, which, by the way, was identical with the night that George Grafton held the outlaws at bay, in the Wolf's Ranch, Seelyce left the banker's mansion, and set out on foot toward the Chinese quarter.

In half an hour he arrived at the mansion occupied by the League of Twelve, and mounting the steps he rung the bell.

A plain-looking girl of nineteen or twenty years of age, soon answered the summons, to whom Seelyce said something in French, at which she nodded, and he entered.

Without waiting for instructions he ascended the stairs, which evidenced the fact that he was no stranger there.

Upon arriving at the first landing, he directed his footsteps to the door of Madam Mystery's private parlor, upon which he gave a delicate little rap, and coughed slightly, several times.

The door immediately opened, and Madam Mystery welcomed the banker's step-son with a winning smile. She was attired in a charming costume, with low neck and short sleeves, and, with the mask absent from her face, was most royally beautiful.

"Welcome, Mr. Seelyce," she said, as he entered.

"You are quite a stranger."

"Well, yes, but none the less glad so see you, dear

Lucille—I mean, Madam Mystery," and a peculiar smile flitted across his sallow face. "I trust you are glad to see me."

"Ever glad to see you, Sydney," she said, linking her arm through his, and leading the way to a luxurious sofa. "When you come, Madam Mystery the Female Forger is hidden under the charming exterior of—"

"Lucille Sturdevant, lady," he finished.

"Sh! you should not utter the name aloud!" she said, quickly. "Even ears are said to exist in walls!"

"Pooh! I don't take stock in such nonsense. The old gent called on you since our last meeting, did he not?"

"Yes—at that boarding place."

"Well, I suppose you gave him an answer?"

"Of course not. I have toyed with him about long enough, and shall shake him, directly."

"As will the world. Matters threaten to reach a crisis, with him, ere many weeks go by. The forged paper is pouring in upon him, fast, and that cursed honor of his, will not allow it to go to protest. It won't take long to drain his money-bags. You are dealing him a hard blow, Lucille—tell me why it is so?"

"To gain a fortune, is one reason—to keep a vow made by a dying bedside, is another," the beautiful woman replied, a strange moody expression for a moment flitting across her countenance.

"Well, I need not complain, as long as it is not me you are bleeding. Can you not do the handsome thing by me, to-night, Lucille?—that is, to write me out a twenty-five-thousand-dollar mortgage on his dwelling and other city real estate? It won't cost you scarcely more than the stroke of your pen, and at the same time will place him largely in my power."

"No, Sydney—you can obtain no more obligative papers, through me. As long as I was infatuated with you, your wish was my law, but now it is changed."

"You do not mean to tell me that your love for me has expired?" Seelyce demanded.

"Yes, it has expired, in the dawning of a new love, which is tenfold greater."

"And, pray, who is this new favored one?"

"You do not know him," Madam Mystery said, coolly—"he is a stranger in Frisco and his name is Bonanza Bill Barclay."

CHAPTER XIV.

AN OUTLAW'S END.—BILL BARCLAY'S AID.—STARTLING REVELATION OF A CRIMINAL LIFE.—A DEATH-BED CONFESSION.

It was a striking tableau—that which was presented in the gambling apartment of Wolf's Ranch, and one that savored of imminent peril to those concerned.

Grafton, in his disguise of Sandy Morse, stood with his back against a cigar counter, and a pair of cocked revolvers in his grasp, ready for business.

The gang of habitués of the den, headed by Black Jake McDowel, had come to a halt a few yards away, and stood glaring at their game, savagely, with weapons drawn.

They hesitated to advance further in front of the gaze of the detective's leveled six-shots, for all over Frisco had George Grafton the repute of being a dead shot, and a man who was a wildcat to handle, when cornered.

"Come! ye'd better surrender, cuss ye!" Black Jake cried, savagely. "We don't allow no cussed spies in the Ranch, I reckon, an' we're goin' to boost ye. Ye needn't think we ken't do it, fer we're fifty ter one, when we all club tergether, an' we generally make things howl!"

"Come on, if you want to!" Grafton replied, menacingly. "The invitation is open to any of you that want to get salivated. I come here with no intention of disturbing any of you, and if you let me alone, I will take my departure as quietly and inoffensively as I came. If, however, you are thirsting for a row, and have selected me as the subject, just sail right in, and I'll guarantee you a red-hot reception."

"That ain't our leetle game, sir detective," the ring-leader replied, whose name was Dugan. "We fellers ar' a sort o' Protective Brotherhood, ye see, an' death on all servants o' the law, an' when we ketch a customer like you, we generlly do fer him. So ye may as well throw down your tools, an' give up peaceably."

"When I do, just apprise me of the fact!" Grafton replied, coolly. "If I am to turn up my toes, I propose to do it in game style. So if you want me, come along, and you are welcome to all you get."

The gang of ruffians exchanged glances, and hesitated. Evident it was that they feared the consequences of an open attack upon the bold detective.

As for Grafton, he was outwardly cool, and really but little excited. This was no new position for him to occupy; twice before in his detective experience had he been placed in a similar fix, and on each occasion had fought his way out without scarcely a scratch to tell of his struggle.

In the present case he saw that a struggle was again before him, but he would rather have avoided it, as there were fifty or more to one, against him—a fearful odds that any man must hesitate to tackle.

Yet to tackle it was the detective's resolve, if they advanced a step further, which he had no doubt they would do.

And he was not mistaken.

Bitter were these habitués of Wolf's Ranch against the sons of the law and justice, and they never allowed one to escape them, if it could be prevented.

"Come! boys, aire we ter be held at bay by one consarned galoot?" McDowel cried, fiercely. "Aire we goin' ter let et be sed that Grafton, ther detective, cum ter Wolf's Ranch an' dared ther hull crowd o' us? Not much we ain't ef we know ourselves, an' we ruther reckon we do. Git ready, now, an' when ye hear me yell One, Two, Three, jest sail right in, an' take the cuss alive. We kin do et, by pilgrims, you bet, an' w'en we git the catamount caged we'll make him howl. Ready! now—one! two! three!"

Ready were they!

The word had no more than been given when two-score or more of the devils rushed forward toward the cornered detective.

Then ensued a scene of which little could be said, except that it was a mass of struggling humanity—a band of men fighting like wolves for the mastery. Not two-score against one man as had at first appeared, but men fighting men, the forces mixed, and nearly equally divided.

What was the meaning? Were ruffians fighting their own mates in the defense of the bold detective?

It would have seemed so.

On each instant was heard the sharp report of re-

volvers, the clash of knives, with an accompaniment of deep groans and fierce death-yells. Men dropped, bruised and bleeding, only to be trodden under foot. It was a fierce, terrible affray—a battle of desperate men.

"On, boys, on!" a deep-toned voice was heard to shout—the familiar and unmistakable voice of Frisco's Chief of Police;—"on, I say! Let's save Grafton, and clean out this den of cut-throats, or die in the attempt!"

And there was a wild responding roar of voices, and the battle waged hotter and with redoubled fury, between both parties.

In the meantime, the black-clad, black-masked stranger, whom Grafton had noticed, began to grow excited, where he had previously been passive.

"Ze detective will be killed!" he muttered, excitedly. "Ze ruffians are too many for him. Zounds! zat must not be; I will put out ze lights!"

And, drawing his revolver, he cocked it, and in rapid succession sent bullet after bullet through the chimneys of the lamps, the draught caused by the lightning flight of the leaden missile in each instance extinguishing the flame.

He then plunged into the struggling mass, knife in hand, and the blackness hid him from view.

On—on waged the battle, amid a pandemonium of frightful yells, curses and reports. It was one of the bloodiest affrays that had ever occurred in the notorious criminal den, Wolf's Ranch.

At last, nearly blood-blinded, and bleeding from a dozen wounds, Grafton fought himself away out of the mob, and ran for the door, determined, if possible, to escape with his life before his loss of blood should render him too weak.

McDowel, however, saw him, and with an oath sprung in pursuit, and thus the two men rushed from the Ranch into the narrow, dark, deserted street, and behind them, in hot pursuit, came the black-masked stranger, who, with his revolver, had put out the lights in the saloon.

"Halt! cuss ye!" McDowel roared, hoarsely, as he leaped on after the detective. "Halt! or I'll plug ye!"

"Plug away!" the gritty detective shouted. "When you take me you'll get my dead body!"

At this juncture there was a heavy fall upon the pavement, and a bellowing sort of groan.

Grafton looked around, and saw that McDowel had fallen prostrate.

The masked stranger was rushing up!

He stood a moment undecided what course to pursue.

"Stop!" the masked man cried. "You have nothing to fear from me. McDowel's race is run, and I want you to carry him to my shanty, on Ching Ling's Alley."

Grafton was human. He saw that the bullying miner was helpless—that the masked stranger was evidently not a foe, and therefore he resolved to respond to the appeal.

"I haven't got more than a cart-load of life left in me," the detective said; "but I guess I can tote one end of the poor cuss."

Black Jake was insensible when they picked him up and hurried away through the dark street—dead, perhaps, as he gave no signs of life.

Grafton was dizzy, weak, faint, but staggered on, carrying the heels of the outlaw.

Finally they left the narrow street for a still nar-

rower alley or court, upon which several dingy brick dwellings were situated.

Into one of these they carried McDowel and laid him upon a couch, after which the masked stranger locked the door, and closed the shutters.

"You must remain here with me until I see whether this ruffian recovers or not," he said, addressing Grafton. "Wait a moment, and I will get a light and attend to your wounds."

He soon succeeded in lighting a lamp, and placed it on a mantle, where it threw illumination into every part of the dingy, rudely-furnished room.

"Now, if you will tell me where you are hit, I will endeavor to dress your wounds," he said, turning to the detective, who had sunk into a chair. "This has been a bloody night's work, but I trust the Chief of Police will clean out the den. Did you suspect that he was in the room, previous to McDowel's creating a disturbance?"

"Yes. I suspected something of the kind, or I should hardly have ventured a row with the ruffians. I caught a glimpse of a policeman's badge, and that gave me an idea that I was not alone. As to the wounds, I guess none are dangerous. There's one on the side of my head, one through a fleshy part of my right side, one in my right arm, another in my left and one in the calf of my leg. I marvel I was not riddled, for the bullets pattered around me like hail. What is your name, may I ask?"

"You may call me La Pierre. I know you, although you may never have heard of me," the man replied, as he removed his gloves, and prepared to dress the detective's wounds.

With his soft white hands he went gently and yet skillfully to work, and soon had Grafton feeling a great deal better, with his wounds dressed, and the blood washed from his face.

Attention was then turned to the insensible ruffian, McDowel.

He had received a wound from a bullet, in the forehead, and also a knife-thrust in the side, which did not bleed externally.

"He is not dead, yet," Grafton said, after feeling around the region of his heart, "but he won't hold forth much longer. Have you any stimulant?"

"No! but I will soon get some," and seizing his hat, La Pierre hurried from the house.

He was gone only a few minutes, when he returned with a bottle of brandy.

A few drops were poured down McDowel's throat, and his head was liberally bathed with it. The effect was magical.

With a long-drawn breath he gasped; a shudder shook his frame, and he opened his eyes. Then he made an attempt to rise, but fell back, exhausted, his hand creeping toward his belt, as he saw Grafton.

But La Pierre had thoughtfully removed his weapons.

A faint curse escaped McDowel, as he discovered that they were gone.

"Oh! you're safely on your back, old man," La Pierre announced, "and what's more, I don't believe you'll get off from it again, very soon. You've got an ugly jab in your side, that has touched mighty close to the vitals."

"Y-yes, I know," the miner replied, hoarsely. "Dugan struck me, thinkin' et was the detective yonder. Et was dark, ye see."

"Yes, it was darker than Stygia, but not half so dark as it will be for you, old man, when you get out of this world," Grafton suggested. "If you've got any praying to do, or any confessions to make, you'd better get at 'em, for I opine your wind won't hold out a great while longer."

"No, I guess not, nuther," was the reply. "I'm goin' ter cash in my chips, might quick, I expect, an' s'pect I might as well make a clean bre'st o' it. Ef ye'll leave me a bit, I'll consider w'at I've got ter confess."

Accordingly La Pierre and Grafton withdrew to an inner room.

Here the masked man lighted another lamp, and they seated themselves to wait.

"A great deal depends now, upon the confession of that man," La Pierre resumed. "He has been a great criminal, and an arch schemer, and could reveal much of importance, did he choose."

The waiting was long and tedious, but finally there was a faint call, and they re-entered the room where the outlaw lay.

"Send the detective out, and I will say what I have to say to you," the outlaw growled, glaring fiercely at Grafton, who accordingly went back into the inner room, and closed the door.

With paper and pencil, La Pierre seated himself beside the sick man, and took down, word for word, the life confession of Black Jake McDowel. It was a startling revelation of a criminal life, and at times the masked man shuddered for the future of the wretch who narrated.

At last the confession was ended, and with the last word, Jake McDowel expired.

When La Pierre called Grafton in, he pointed to the stiffening form upon the couch, and said:

"He is dead. Peace to his ashes. You may go now, as I shall not need your services further. I will see that the poor misguided wretch has a decent burial at my own expense."

CHAPTER XV.

BILL BARCLAY IN A DUNGEON.—A ROSE OF A GIRL.—JESSE JAMES ENTERS THE MYSTERY.—BARCLAY'S GREAT DISCOVERY.

In the meantime how fared Bill Barclay, the incarcerated young miner and bonanza-finder?

In his dungeon beneath the retreat of the League of Twelve, he had spent six weary days in total darkness, seeing no light, except when a brutal-looking Irishman came, at morning and night, to bring him his rations of dry bread and water.

Every day, accompanying the frugal meal, came a delicately-perfumed note from Madam Mystery, asking him if he had concluded to accept her terms yet. And the answer he invariably sent back by the jailer was "No."

Of the No. 12 of the league, he had seen nothing since she had accompanied him to the dungeon. What had become of her, or why she had failed to pay him a visit, was more than he knew, but he concluded that she had been detained from coming by the female tigress and beauty, Madam Mystery.

But upon the seventh day of his confinement, not long after he had been served with his morning meal, he heard the trap gliding downward; soon the door of his dungeon was unlocked; somebody opened it and stepped inside.

In the darkness he could not see who.

"Sh! don't make a noise," a low voice cautioned. "I am Rose Lawton, and I have finally got to see you."

The next instant the light of a bull's-eye lantern shone within the dungeon, and with surprise Barclay saw—

Not the old humpback, but a pretty young woman, whose face was fair, whose form was shapely, and whose eyes shone brilliantly.

She was enveloped in a long water-proof cloak, but wore no hat or head covering, her hair falling in a wave over her shoulders.

"Don't interrupt me!" she said, as Bill was about to speak. "I have but two minutes to stay, and must speak quickly. Here are a lantern, a bottle of chloroform, and directions how to escape. I've been ordered to leave, and came here first, unknown to Madam Mystery. Some time in the future I may see you, as I have fallen in love with you at sight. I have no time to think of that, however, now. Here is a revolver, also. You may need to use it. The Madam's safe, where your papers are, is in the office, on the first floor, to the left of the hall. Duplicate keys to every door or lock in the house are hung under a hat, near the entrance to the office. There! I must go now—good-by."

She sprung forward, threw her arms around his neck, and kissed him; then turned abruptly, hurried from the cell, and a moment later Barclay heard the trap gliding rapidly upward.

Behind her she had left the lantern, the chloroform, a piece of paper, and a loaded six-shooter—the requisites to get Bill Barclay out of the den of the League of Twelve.

"She is a wonderful girl," Barclay exclaimed, after she had gone, "and most fortunately so for me. I am now prepared to fight this Madam Mystery, after my own fashion."

The paper was the first thing he examined, for it was the key to his safety.

By the light of the lantern he was able to decipher the chirography, and its import was as follows:

"MR. BARCLAY:—By prying up a large stone that lies in the bottom of your dungeon, you will find the end of a rope that runs underground. Pull this rope, and the door of your cell will fly open, and the trap will glide down to receive you. Step on, and the trap will bear you up into a room, above. From there you must manage your own escape. Be careful, however, not to leave your dungeon, until you judge that it is at least midnight, or later, for fear you may encounter some of the members of the League. Remember me.

"ROSE LAWTON."

It was with impatience that Barclay waited for the day to merge into another night, when he could work. By glancing at his watch, which had not been taken from him, he learned that he had twelve hours or more to wait, so he turned down his lantern, and secreted it, along with the other things, under his cot.

He then threw his jacket over them, to keep the light from being seen by the Irishman, when he came with the food.

The day passed drearily enough. At six, in the

evening, the Irishman appeared with the customary repast of bread and water, but soon left.

When he had gone, Barclay munched a few mouthfuls of the stale bread, and drank a swallow of the water. He then lay down to finish the waiting. When he thought it was in the neighborhood of midnight, he arose and made preparations for the work before him. A glance at his watch apprised him that it was half-past eleven.

Secreting the revolver and the chloroform upon his person he then took the lantern in his hand, ready for use.

Prying up the large flat stone that formed a part of the floor of his dungeon, he discovered the end of a two inch pipe protruding from the ground, and out of the pipe the knotted end of a piece of cable, just as Rose Lawton had foretold.

Setting his lantern upon the ground, he seized the cable, and gave it a vigorous pull.

The next instant the door of the dungeon flew open, and he heard the trap gliding swiftly downward, from above.

The moment it grated upon the bottom, he leaped through the door, upon it, and not a moment too soon, either, for it instantly began to ascend. Up! up! he went rapidly, and when he stopped, the platform, on which he stood, formed a part of the floor of a large unfurnished room.

He remembered it as the apartment from which he had been trapped into the pit and dungeon.

Turning on the full light of his bull's-eye, he flashed it around the room, only to perceive that it was deserted. He then stepped from the trap upon the floor, and paused, in order to determine which way to go.

There were several doors leading from the apartment, and he scarcely knew which to take. Some might lead him to safety, while others were likely to lead him into the danger of an encounter with some of the members of the League. He finally decided upon the first left-hand entrance as the best to adopt, and after pulling off his boots, crept stealthily forward. On opening the door, the first thing he discovered was a magnificent hall; and the second was a woman's hat hanging to a rack upon the wall. The words of Rose Lawton instantly flashed across his mind, and raising the hat, he found a bunch of skeleton keys under it.

"Ha! I am now doubly armed," he muttered, with satisfaction. "If I cannot turn a trump, now, I don't know the reason why. First of all, I must chloroform every person in the house, myself excepted—then I can work unmolested."

This threatened to be no easy job, but he did not hesitate on that account. He was resolved to go through with the matter, if it cost him his liberty again. To be sure he was unacquainted with the house, but he was confident that he could succeed.

Up in the mines he had several times figured with success, as a detective, and he now was determined that he would do the stronghold of the League of Twelve, in good shape.

Standing in the hall, he listened for some time to hear if any were astir, but all was silent. Evidently the house was wrapped in slumber.

Creeping up the stairs he finally reached the room where he had first seen Madam Mystery. Trying the door he found it unlocked, and stealthily opening it, he entered. All was darkness and silence, within, but this

did not deter him from action. Turning on the light from his lantern, he gazed around him to find exactly what he had expected—that the room was unoccupied.

"She is gone—the very one I most wanted to capture—unless she is in the next room," he muttered. "It will do no harm to take a peep in here, anyhow."

A door opened from the parlor into the mentioned apartment, and stealing softly forward, he opened it and peered into the room.

It was empty!

The lights were turned low, and the bed unoccupied. Madam Mystery was not at home.

Bonanza Bill uttered an impatient exclamation as he noted the fact. "It would seem that these female outlaws have deserted the ranch," he muttered. "I hope I've not been the means of scaring them away."

Entering the room he searched it thoroughly, but could find nothing of importance, except a nasal syringe which he pocketed, readily seeing use for it.

Leaving that apartment he passed through the little parlor, and once more emerged into the hall. Here he paused long enough to fill the syringe with chloroform from his bottle—then he approached a door, just opposite, and squirted a stream of the drug into the room, through the keyhole.

After several minutes had elapsed, he unlocked the door with one of his keys, and softly entered.

This room too, was unoccupied.

"Humph! At this rate, I've got things my own way," the miner thought. "The syringe consumes my chloroform too fast, and I shall have to arm myself with a sponge."

This article he found in a washstand drawer—then went on, on his tour of the other rooms.

In the next five rooms visited he found a woman in each, and so stealthy was he in his movements, that they were not aroused from their slumbers until too deeply under the influence of the chloroform to resist.

From one room to another he went, swiftly, but softly, until nine females and one male had been overpowered on the second and third floors, the man being the Irish jailer.

"That leaves Madam Mystery and two members of the League missing," Barclay muttered, as he stood in the lower hall, after having visited every room in the house but one, and that one the room that Rose Lawton had averred contained the safe and the spoils of the League of Twelve. "I reckon I won't be troubled now, if I attempt to dissect this nest. It must not take me long, however, for I have needs to get out of this cursed Chinese quarter, yet to-night, in order to set George Grafton and the police down upon the place."

Opening the door, he entered the office, to find it brilliantly lighted, by a pendent chandelier, but tenantless. It was a large apartment, containing a great desk, reaching to the ceiling, a monster safe nearly as high, and luxurious easy-chairs, while the floor was richly carpeted, and the walls hung with rare pictures.

The safe first demanded Barclay's attention, and he knelt beside it, eagerly, for he had little doubt that it contained the papers, which were more valuable to him than money.

The safe was furnished with a combination lock, and he was well aware that he could not open it unless he should blunder upon the right number.

Still, he was resolved to make a try of it, and if he

could not open it, he could wait until he could obtain the aid of the police.

But as good fortune would have it, he hit upon the combination and in five minutes the ponderous door of the great safe was open, and the view of the interior was revealed.

One great drawer was nearly filled with bank-bills ranging in value from one to one hundred dollars each. Then there were numerous pigeon-holes, containing papers, and these Barclay hauled out upon the floor, for examination.

Among the first that came to hand, were his own stolen documents, all intact, and neatly tied in a little roll. With satisfaction he stored these away in his pocket, and then proceeded with his examination.

The larger portion of the papers were of no particular importance, but there was one document that attracted the miner's attention, the chirography being exactly like that upon the paper he had found in the coffin of old Jarecki Armstrong. With no little curiosity Barclay bore the paper to the light and perused it, eagerly.

The document was as follows:—

LAST WORDS.

A few days ago I penned a document reviewing a portion of my past life, and on further reflection there are a few things I would add before departing this life! In my previous paper, I think that I did not make entirely clear that Jarecki Armstrong is not my original name but one I assumed in conjunction with numerous other aliases, during my criminal career.

I was born of a proud and titled family in England, and at an early age came into possession, by entailment, of the family wealth, and the title of Lord Henry Havens. I married soon after, and immediately started out upon my criminal career!

I never saw Lady Havens, after the first six months of my criminal career, but learned that she gave birth, in due time, to a male heir to the Havens' inheritance. Soon after, she died, and the boy was reared to early manhood by the rector who resided upon our estate.

This boy was christened, Bernard Havens! At an early age he married a London actress of note, and two children were born to them. But after several years Lady Isabel longed to return to the stage, and finally did so, against the will of her husband, Lord Bernard, and the action raised a barrier between the couple, and Lord Bernard forbade Lady Isabel ever entering his home again, or seeing her children.

Lady Isabel then stole her boy away, and took ship for Canada. I was then at the head of a gang of Border Bandits known as the Wreckers of Caribou Reef. I well remember that one night we were all grouped about a bonfire on the shore, which we used to use to lure ships aground, their masters thinking the bonfire was a light-house glare, so that we could loot the ship; when I turned to the man who I had made the fighting-chief of the band, I doing the planning, and told him I saw a ship in the offing, and as our lure was lighted, she would soon be ashore. The chief dashed to the other members of the gang, and said—"A fine lot of plunder is coming there in that ship, boys," I heard the Wrecker chief sneer; a few moments later the ship was ashore—and on board was Lady Isabel and her son, and they remained my guests for some time, and I then sent the boy to the United States to look out for himself, while Lady Isabel returned to Europe to con-

tinue her theatrical career—and I learned that she died abroad soon after. I have never been able to find trace of the boy at all, but my son Bernard Havens, lives in San Francisco, and is a man of greath wealth and popularity; I have seen him often, unknown to him; he is a good and noble man, and I have often taken pride in him since I came to Frisco to reside. My life has not been entirely barren. By miserly stinginess I have from time to time gathered large fortunes, and buried them where human hands cannot easily reach them. But, not in North America. The total value of the buried treasure would more than pay our national debt. Who finds it, keeps it. One man, named ZOSOE, holds the map, ignorant of its value.

The woman Madam Mystery, whom I have placed at the head of, and in command of the League of Twelve, is my wife—or one of my wives rather, for I have hosts of them, in various portions of the globe! She is also foster sister to that notorious outlaw, Jesse James!

(Signed) JARECKI ARMSTRONG.

A strange exclamation escaped the lips of Bill Barclay, as he finished reading, folded the document, and put it in his pocket. But that was all.

If the story of the dead pirate's buried wealth had amazed him, he did not betray it in his looks, but went calmly on, examining the remainder of the papers.

They proved to be of no particular consequence, and he turned from them to the desk, in which he found only three things of any importance—a blank check-book, a book containing the signatures of many prominent business men, and a book containing names of those who had been "bled" by the League of Twelve.

These, together with the bank notes, he crammed into an old sachel which he found in a closet; then, stuffing all the papers back into the safe, he locked it, and was ready to take his departure.

"Now for the police, to pull the house while the female devils are drugged," he muttered. "This adventure is not turning out so bad, after all. I have not only regained my papers, but have captured the treasure, and can gain the same repute by delivering the members of the League up to justice. This money I will also deal out to those who have been bled, in proportion to their losses. But, hold! I must not risk losing these papers that have come into my possession again. I must secrete them, and there is but one place to do it."

He sat down and pulled off one of his boots, and then, with his pen-knife ripped the lining sufficiently to allow him to slip the thin documents between. After placing them in this receptacle, he pulled on the boot and was ready to leave.

To make all doubly sure, however, he searched through the lower part of the house until he had found a sufficient quantity of rope for his purpose; then he ascended the stairs, and proceeded to bind the hands and feet of those whom he had previously chloroformed.

He found them all apparently in deep stupefaction, and the binding job was easy. After he had completed it, he once more descended the stairs, and unlocking the front door, left the house.

He had scarcely stepped upon the street when he suddenly found himself in the grasp of a half-dozen men, who had darted out of the shadows, and in a jiffy he was handcuffed.

"What in thunder do you mean, pilgrims?" he de-

manded, in surprise. "I reckon you've got the wrong man this time!"

"Oh! no we haven't!" one of the men replied, with a chuckle. "We detectives don't generally make mistakes. We've been shadowing this ranch for nigh a week, and as you're the first exit, you're our man. Please accept an invitation to waltz down and see his Honor."

And at this juncture all hands, save Bill, laughed.

He did not laugh, but whistled.

"Oh! I see," he said. "You catch me in the act of leaving an outlaw retreat, and naturally spot me for one of the gang. Well, I don't know as you are to blame for that. But you've tackled the wrong pig by the ear, as I can soon prove, when you take me up."

"Oh! no doubt it will be all right," the leader of the party said, with a sarcastic laugh, in which the others joined. "Come! trot along with you."

CHAPTER XVI.

LA PIERRE, IS NOW THE MYSTERY.—WHERE IS HE?—BARCLAY TELLS THINGS IN COURT.—A NEW CAMPAIGN PLANNED.

Of course Barclay could do no better than to obey. Handcuffed as he was, and surrounded by full half a dozen armed men, resistance or explanations were useless. Therefore he marched along, feeling confident that he would be acquitted when his testimony should be heard.

It was a night of dense darkness, and he was glad of it, for few people were abroad to see him in custody.

Upon reaching the city jail, he was locked up in a cell, and apprised that he could be granted no hearing until morning.

This was not contrary to his expectation, and he accordingly threw himself upon the cot, and prepared to spend the night as pleasantly as circumstances and his surroundings would permit.

He had become inured to rough usage in his life in the mines, and took whatever happened him with the quiet confidence peculiar to him.

Morning dawned at last, and he was led from the jail to the police court.

His dashing appearance, and the fact that he was in the charge of an officer, created curiosity, and quite a crowd followed him to the court-room, to learn the nature of the offense for which he was to be heard.

All in due time he was arraigned before the judge, who was a surly-looking, gray-eyed man, that one would have pronounced unmerciful, to say the least.

In answer to the formal inquiries, Detective Duncan, the chief of the party who had arrested Barclay, said:

"The prisoner at the bar was arrested just after emerging from a 'spotted' house in the Chinese quarter. Do not know prisoner; do not think I ever saw him before. The house has been suspected as the abode of a band of counterfeiters and forgers. We were set to shadow it by Grafton, the detective. Prisoner is the first person to emerge from the place in three days—that is, by the front entrance."

"What is your name, sir?" the judge asked, turning to the prisoner.

"Bonanza Bill Barclay, I allow," the miner replied, not in the least disconcerted by the biting tones of his Honor.

"Barclay, eh?" the judge said, perceiving at once the kind of a customer he had to deal with. "Where do you live?"

"I opine Leopard Lode, Californy, holds the better share of my anatomy, when I'm to home," was Bill's answer.

"What is your occupation, sir?"

"Well, I reckon at present, I'm occupying the prisoner's box. When I'm up in the Yuba destrict, I generally make myself purty lively at slingin' the pick an' pan."

"Oh! you are a miner?"

"That's about the fit fer it; yes."

"Well, sir, you are charged with having emerged from a house that is suspected to be a den of forgers and criminals. What have you to say to that?"

"I say that the hoss that told ye so, could brush a dynamite concern wi'out techin' it, he's hit so straight."

"Then you acknowledge you came from the place?"

"You bet!"

"And also admit that it is such a den as it is suspected of being?"

"Don't ye fergit it!"

"And you also will not deny but that you are a member of the gang that infests this place?" the judge demanded.

"I opine I will!" Barclay assured grimly. "I ain't in the least way connected wi' the gang. P'raps ye've heerd o' George Grafton, hain't ye?"

"That gentleman is prominently known, sir."

"Well, ef ye want any further lip then I want ter give ye, jest tackle him. I'm ther 'possum as found ther document w'at told about Madam Mystery an' ther League of Twelve, all about which you may hev heerd. Well, I an' Grafton went in snucks in the matter, an I got nabbed an' hev bin shet up fer a week. I was just escapin', last night, when ther detectives grabbed me. Ef ye don't believe me, just go back ter ther house, an' asks 'em where Bill Barclay is."

"Your testimony is weak," the judge said, dryly, "and I shall have to commit you back to jail, until Grafton can be found, and his testimony taken. If he vouches for you, all right. You shall be freed."

And according to his Honor's decision, Barclay was taken back to the "jug" and locked up.

It was not quite to his satisfaction, for he had expected that Grafton would be present to vouch for him, and thereby procure his release.

He knew, however, that if Grafton was to be found, his speedy release was a certainty.

Two days passed, but no Grafton was to be found. So said the jailer.

It was reported that he had last been seen in search of Miss Zoe Havens, the banker's daughter, who was missing.

On the third day after his hearing, Barclay was surprised to receive from the jailer a large frosted cake, upon a plate.

"A veiled ledly fetched it, an' wanted I should give it to you," the man said, handing it to Barclay. "I reckon sum gal hain't fergot ye."

Barclay wonderingly received the gift, and after the jailer had gone, he set it upon one end of his cot, and surveyed it, grimly.

"Who can have sent that?" he muttered, thoughtfully. "Was it sent with good or evil intent? By Heaven! I believe there is death in that very cake. What woman would send me such an offering with good intention? I know of none, unless it might be the girl, Rose Lawton, and I do not believe it came from

her. I should quicker think that it came from the female devil, Madam Mystery, and is poisoned."

The more he thought about it, the stronger grew his conclusion that he had not come far from the truth, in his decision.

The Female Forger, he reasoned, was his enemy, and if such were the case, a woman of her principles would not hesitate on trifles, such as getting rid of an enemy by poisoning.

She was a bold, bad woman, who had turned her unusual smartness, intelligence and her very soul into service of the devil, whom she served. Barclay had inventoried her, correctly, the first time he saw her, and he knew that her enmity was unrequited affection—something to be feared.

"I will not touch the cake, at any rate," he decided. "It looks mighty tempting, but life holds even more inducements to me than cake."

"Which is quite correct," a familiar voice exclaimed, and George Grafton at this juncture entered the cell, accompanied by the jailer.

"Thunder!" was the miner's involuntary exclamation. "Where *did* you spring from, pard?"

"Oh! I've been on the trail, and to-day, for the first, heard of your predicament, and at once hastened to your rescue."

"I felt sure you would," Barclay said, warmly, "and as soon as I can shed these stiffly starched cuffs, I'll grip your paw."

"Well, you can shed 'em now, I reckon," the jailer said, producing his keys and unlocking the handcuffs, which he had no sooner done than the brother-detectives clasped hands in a cordial "shake."

"By order from his Honor, you're free."

"And I owe this liberation to you," Barclay said, wringing Grafton's hand warmly.

"Don't mention it," the detective replied. "You know we leagued ourselves together as brothers, and it was but natural I should come to your aid."

"Well, mebbe the tables may be turned some time. How about matters—has anything been done?"

"Yes, I think the league is broken up for the present, or, at least, it has been scattered to other quarters. A raid was made, the chief tells me, upon the house in the Chinese quarter, but no captures made. The inmates had all scattered, and nothing of importance could be discovered."

Barclay shook his head grimly.

"They were too fast," he said, his brows knitting in a frown. "They should have waited until the matter had blown over a little, and the league would not have sloped. As it is, they can probably never be trapped. I heard that you were searching for a missing party, Zoe Havens, by name. Did you find her?"

"No. I can find no trace of her."

"Was she the daughter of Bernard Havens, the banker?"

"She was. What do you know about Bernard Havens?"

"Only a few p'int. What are the facts of the case? Did she abscond, or was she abducted?"

"Come along with me, and I will tell you as we go," Grafton said, and they accordingly quitted the jail for the street. "It appears, according to Mr. Havens' statement, that a scheming English villain, named McDowel, has put forward a young woman as heir-claimant to the Havens inheritance, said McDowel claiming that Miss Zoe was not Havens' own child, he having

changed the children in their infancy, substituting his own daughter, and taking possession of the then baronet's child, for speculative purposes. A few years ago he made known this secret to Havens, and threatened to produce the real heir. Havens was loath to believe it, and having become attached to Zoe, and believing that she was his own child, and that McDowel's game was base villainy, he gave him a large sum of money to keep still for a stated number of years. The time expired a few days ago, and McDowel sent his claimant forward. Zoe, by some means, got wind of the matter, poor girl, and has sloped—the Lord only knows where. I can not find the least trace of her."

Barclay whistled, meditatively. "And so this new claimant occupies her place?" he asked.

"Yes. She has taken up her position at the banker's house, and they say she is bossing things around pretty much to suit herself. But the banker does not believe her his child, and has a matter of a couple of weeks yet to work on, before publicly acknowledging her as his daughter. And by the eternal, it must be proved that Zoe is the rightful heir. She is my betrothed, you see, and no adventuress shall usurp her place, if I can help it."

"What have you got to work on?"

"I am hopeful that I have a big 'lead,' but it will require our united efforts to unearth it. This man, Jake McDowel, was killed in a brawl at Wolf's Ranch, a few nights since. At the time, I was there searching for you, and got into a row. I finally escaped, pursued by McDowel, but he fell, soon, and I assisted a fellow, named La Pierre to carry him to a house in a neighboring alley. This La Pierre took the ruffian's dying confession, but, being in an adjoining room, I heard nothing of it. Indeed, at this time, I knew nothing relative to McDowel or the events I have been narrating. After McDowel's death, La Pierre dismissed me, and I left the Chinese quarter. Now, I am in hopes, that, in the dying confession of McDowel, he threw some light upon this case."

"It is barely possible that you may be right. La Pierre, then, is the man most desirable just now?"

"He is."

"Then we will search for him. Have you seen the new claimant?"

"No, but they say she is a beauty."

"Doubtless!" the miner said. "I have noticed that beauty and badness often go hand in hand. But, come—let's go to your office and prepare for the new campaign!"

Sydney Seelyce was closeted with Madam Mystery, in the parlor of a private boarding-house, about the same time that Bill Barclay was released from jail.

The Female Forger was comfortably seated in a luxurious chair, engaged in puffing at a cigarette, as she watched Seelyce, who was pacing impatiently up and down the room, a frown upon his usually placid face.

"You might loan me the money at least, if you will not give it to me," he said, half pleadingly. "You see I've got to have money, or go to jail. Money would soon jump me out of the city, but having none, I'm liable to arrest under the suspicion that I am a member of the disconcerted League."

"Why don't you pass some of those notes you have, that I gave you?" Madam Mystery asked.

"Bah! they are worthless now, since the League

business has received ventilation. Havens won't honor them, nor will anyone else. Havens has changed his style of signature, and is very chary about letting any one see it. *You've lost your hold on him.*"

"Perhaps *not!*" the beautiful woman said, with a peculiar smile. "I think I shall marry him!"

"The devil you say!"

"Oh! you need not be astonished. You have no claim upon my affections or admiration, since I saw Bill Barclay. I regard you as a Princess may her pet poodle. Of course I won't whip you, if you persist in raving about me. Indeed, as Mrs. Havens, you will have a chance to regain caste in your step-father's house, and so long as I remain there, you may."

"But I dare not longer remain in the city, you see."

"As to that, I'll give you enough to get to Sacramento."

"Good! You are not stingy, Lucille. By the way, you have perhaps heard of the new claimant to the banker's property?"

"Yes, and have seen her, too. She was one of the members of the League."

"Oh! by Jove! I thought her face was not unfamiliar. How will you agree? Perhaps two beauties in one house won't jibe?"

"Oh! that can be settled. The new claimant is yet bound to me by oath, and I shall make her share her wealth, of course. Don't fear for that."

"All right. How long will you remain Mrs. Bernard Havens?"

"Ah! that is a question. Perhaps only a year or so, until I can get his cash under my thumb. Then I'll slope. Here's your money, now—fifty dollars. Don't give me away."

"There's no danger I'll give you away such a gold mine as you are," Seelyce said, with a laugh, as he took the cash and also his departure.

CHAPTER XVII.

BILL BARCLAY UNMASKS THE DIAMOND QUEEN.—GRAFTON'S GREAT DISCOVERY.—LA PIERRE TO THE RESCUE.—THE END OF THE SKEIN.

And thus two more weeks passed by!

To Bernard Havens they were two weeks of torture!

Rapidly was the time approaching, when he must acknowledge to the world that Mabel McDowel was his daughter. Nothing could he prove to the contrary. Although he passed many a sleepless night in racking his brain in search of some favorable clew.

George Grafton had also worked faithfully in his interest, but when the banker would ask the result, he simply received a discouraging shake of the head.

Nothing could be found of Zoe, or of La Pierre—no clew could be got of them; nothing could be unearthed, that promised to refute the claim of the McDowel.

She had evidently taken it for granted from the first, that her hold would remain firm, and she had established herself as comfortably as possible under the circumstances.

She treated the banker with impudent *hauteur*, and he treated her with cold respectfulness. There was no love between them.

One evening on entering his library, Havens found her there, seated in his favorite easy-chair. He frowned, but did not speak his thoughts. He always refrained from doing this, when moody, for fear his temper would get the better of him.

"Here is a letter for you, which I took the liberty of

opening," she said, handing him a sheet that she had been perusing. "I learn that you are about to assume the responsibility of a third wife."

Havens seized the missive, angrily.

"You are unduly bold, girl, in thus opening my letters. How dare you?" he cried.

"I dare do as I please," Miss McDowel declared. "Am I not your daughter, and have I not a right to share your secrets?"

"No! you are not my daughter!" the banker cried, with sudden fierceness. "You are an usurer—a base, scheming viper, and although I shall probably have to tolerate you, I shall hate the sight of you."

"Oh! I don't care about that. To get into No. 1 society, and finger a fat purse is my main desire, and I can easily dispense with your affection. How soon is this interesting marriage going to come off, pray? I am anxious to witness it."

The banker did not reply, but glanced at the letter which he still held in his hand. It was penned in a tasteful hand, and ran as follows:

"DEAR MR. HAVENS:

"Upon more deliberate reflection I have decided favorably in your case, and will give you my hand in marriage whenever you come to claim it. Ever your darling,

"LUCILLE."

"Sweet, isn't it?" Miss McDowel said, sarcastically, as he finished, and thrust it into his pocket. "I dare say you will name an early day?"

"I shall, most assuredly. I must have an angel in my home to help me fight a devil!"

"Thank you. Your good sense is abundant. I should certainly prefer a lively body like this Lucille to a sour old chip like you."

"The marriage will take place in this parlor, at noon, day after to-morrow. At the same time, I will declare you my heir and daughter, unless the rightful one turns up. After our marriage, we start immediately for Europe."

"Very well, my dear papa!" Miss McDowel said, mockingly. "I will shop this afternoon, preparatory to the great event."

She did shop, too, having first received a substantial check from the banker. Silks, velvets, laces, and all the many costly adjuncts to a fashionable woman's toilet were purchased, and at last, having satisfied her extravagance for one afternoon, she started for home.

Just as she was alighting from the cab in front of the Havens residence, a man sauntered along the walk, but stopped stock still as he caught a glimpse of her face.

"Hello! by thunder!" was his initial exclamation. "The Diamond Queen, as I live!"

The man was Bill Barclay.

"Sir?" the girl cried, haughtily. "You are mistaken. I am Miss Havens. Move on!"

"Mebbe I will, and mebbe I won't, now," the miner detective declared. "I've got an awful notion that you're Edna Earle, who lifted some financial weight from me a year ago, and handed it over to Madam Mystery. An' ef you're the one that's playin' the game on Havens, I want you to take a little condensed advice; that is, pack up your petticoats and skip—slope—puckachee! Ef ye don't you'll find yourself in a box before you know it."

And then, with a grim laugh, he passed on down the street.

The girl gazed after him with a white face, set teeth, and evilly gleaming eyes.

"It is he—the same," she muttered, gaspingly. "He recognized me, and I fear him. If he should interfere——"

But she decided not to take the miner's advice come what might! She would go on to the bitter end!

And so the parlors of the Havens mansion were thrown open, and a large assemblage of fashionable Friscoans were there to witness the nuptials of the banker and Miss Lucille Sturdevant.

At one end of the grand parlor the banker and his betrothed stood, in company with numerous brides-men and maids; the officiating clergyman stood before them, and read the formal marriage service, until finally came his words:

"*Has any person reason to say why this man and woman shall not be joined together in the holy bonds of wedlock? If so, let him step forward, or forever hold his peace!*"

After the utterance of the words, there was a breathless silence in the room, for a few seconds. Then, to the surprise of all, George Grafton stepped forward, accompanied by Bill Barclay and three officers.

"*I forbid the marriage!*" the detective said, "*as this woman, Lucille Sturdevant, alias Madam Mystery, the female forger, is my prisoner!*"

"Sir!" Bernard Havens roared, springing forward, only to be forced back by Barclay.

"Ay! it is God's own truth!" Grafton cried. "You have been taken in by this beautiful fiend, Mr. Havens—the very woman who has been bleeding you with forgeries. We have been waiting to spring this trap upon her, for several days!"

"'Tis false! 'tis a lie!" Madam Mystery shrieked, struggling frantically in the grasp of the policeman. "It's a base plot to ruin me."

"Off with her, to the jail!" Barclay ordered, and the three officers half dragged her to the street, where a van was waiting. Into this she was put, and then driven away.

Grafton and Barclay remained at the banker's mansion.

The sensation created by the arrest was of course very great, and it was a long time before quiet could be restored.

Then the banker reappeared, leading Miss McDowel by the hand.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "as I have disappointed you in one way, I will introduce you to my daughter, Miss Zoe Havens. With your permission, I will explain what may appear strange to you."

And then he narrated what is already known to the reader, concerning the strange children, and the appearance of the new heir.

When he had finished there was of course an ovation of congratulations offered by the guests, in the midst of which, to the amazement of all, a dusky personage in black, La Pierre, stepped forward.

"Allow me," he said, producing a sheet of paper, "to assert that yonder woman is an impostor, and that the first Zoe Havens is the real daughter of Bernard Havens. I have here the dying confession of Jacob McDowel, the father of yonder impostor, and will read you an extract:

"TELL BERNARD HAVENS I HAVE WRONGED HIM—THAT I NEVER CHANGED THE CHILDREN, AT ALL. I ONLY PLAYED THE GAME FOR STAKES. THE NEW CLAIMANT IS MY OWN DAUGHTER. I AM DYING—MAY GOD HAVE MERCY UPON MY GUILTY SOUL!"

A loud cheer escaped from the lips of Grafton and Barclay, and was echoed by many of those present.

Overcome by the unexpected blow, Mabel McDowel dropped to the floor and was carried out.

Barclay next stepped forward, a smile upon his handsome face.

"This is rather an occasion of revelations, and perhaps it may not be amiss for me to add that I am Bernard Havens' only son and heir, and right here in my breeches pockets, I've got a birth-certificate, and other documents to back the assertion!" he said, bowing. *"After many years, by the grace of God, we are all reunited."*

The chain of intricate circumstances had been broken—the cloud had lifted to admit of a startling and joyful revelation!

Grafton arrested Mabel McDowel, and committed her to jail, charging her with being a member of the League of Twelve!

They were held for trial, but in some way, she and Madam Mystery, most mysteriously escaped; and they were never heard of again. Possibly they have reformed! It is hard telling what a woman will or will not do!

In a few days Zoe Havens returned to her father's home. She had been quietly working in the city in a department store since her disappearance but in such a humble position that no trace of her had gone toward her vantage of safety—and as soon as she married George Grafton, made that as the excuse for his leaving the detective field.

"You see," she urged. "You can't be much of a detective not to have found me—but you will probably be a successful husband," which Grafton was; and Zoe was also a most successful wife.

But Barclay—now a member of the Havens family?

He used to aid Seelyce, degenerated into a common thug, and drunkard, now and then, and some way or another, when the nights are soft, in the summer, and the moon is rising he thinks of Madam Mystery, and wonders where she is. Only the picture of the adventuress seems to blend and fade and then become the face of Rose Lawton, who rescued him from the Dungeon of the League of Twelve!

"I wonder if I will ever see the fair girl again?" then murmurs the popular, handsome, young man.

"Perhaps—in the misty future!" he seems to hear a voice reply!

THE END.

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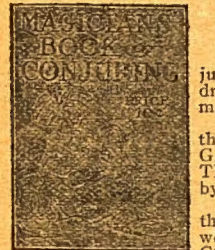
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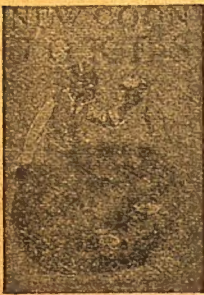
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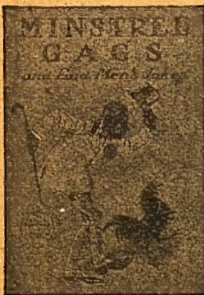
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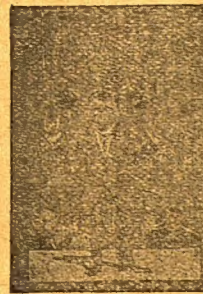
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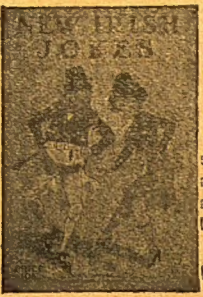
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These stories, issued every Friday, are the greatest detective stories ever written. No man has ever lived in this country or any other whose tales are so thrilling, so entrancing, which so teem with excitement and desperate situations as those of "OLD SLEUTH." The stories are twice as long as those in any other library, each story having the enormous total of 50,000 words. Nothing like it ever before attempted.

THE FOLLOWING NUMBERS ARE NOW OUT:

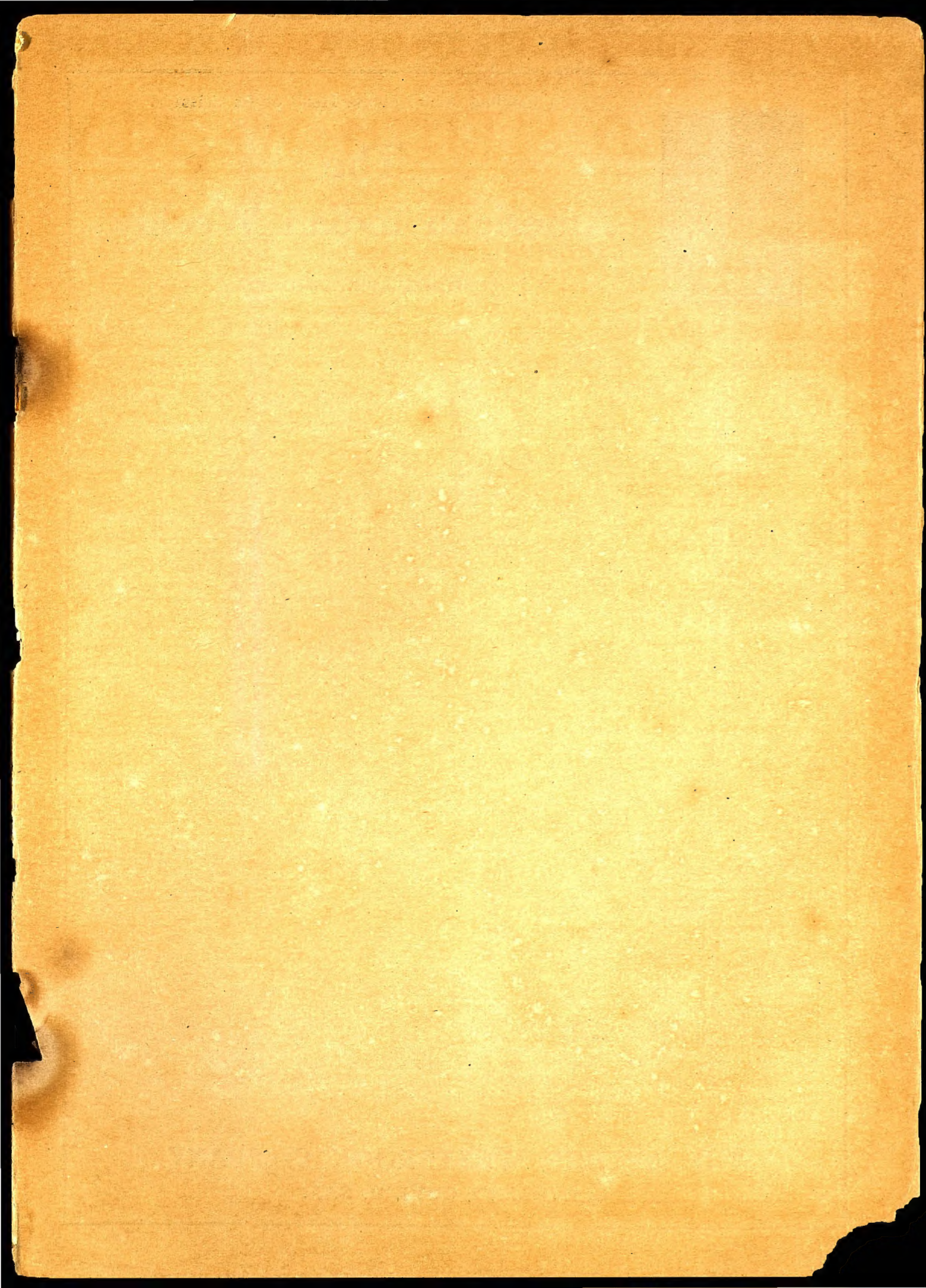
1. The Return of Old Sleuth, the Detective; or The Great Philadelphia Mystery.
2. The Mystery of the Missing Millions; or Tracked by a Great Detective.
3. The Secret of the Haunted House; or The Great Detective's Tragic Find.
4. The King of all Detectives; or Young Jack Sleuth on the Trail.
5. The Giant Detective's Last Shadow; A Tale of Herculean Detective Adventure.
6. The Silent Terror; A Narrative of Genuine Detective Strategy.
7. The Veiled Beauty; or The Mystery of the California Heiress.
8. The Mystery of the Spaniard's Vendetta; or A Great Detective's Marvelous Strategy.
9. The Great Bond Robbery; or Tracked by a Female Detective.
10. Old Sleuth's Greatest Case; or Caught by the King of all Detectives.
11. The Bay Ridge Mystery; or Old Sleuth's Winning Hand.
12. Shadowed to his Doom; or Foiled by the Yankee Detective.
13. Trapping the Counterfeiters; or The Lightning Detective on the Trail.
14. Trailed by the Wall Street Detective; or Badger's Midnight Quest.
15. The Irish Detective's Greatest Case; or The Strategy of O'Neil McDarragh.
16. The Greatest Mystery of the Age; or Saved by the Gipsy Detective.
17. Trapping the Moonshiners; or Strange Adventures of a Government Detective in the Tennessee Mountains.
18. The Giant Detective Among the Cowboys; or The Weird Narrative of a Lost Man.
19. The Mystery of the Black Trunk; or Manfred's Strange Quest.
20. The Chief of the Counterfeiters; or The Boy Detective's Greatest Haul.
21. The Mystery of the Floating Head; or Caught by the King of the Detectives.
22. The Beautiful Criminal; or The New York Detective's Strangest Case.
23. The Great Train Robbery; or Saved by a Woman Detective.
24. The Italian Adventuress; A Tale of Marvelous Plots.
25. Red-Light Will, The River Detective; or The Round-Up of the Wharf Rat's Gang.
26. The Twin Shadows; or A Surprising Case of Mistaken Identity.
27. The Smugglers of New York Bay; or The River Pirates' Greatest Crime.
28. Black Raven, the Terror of the Georgia Moonshiners; or The Mountaineers' Last Stand.
29. Unmasking a Villain; or The French Detective's Greatest Case.
30. Snared by a Russian Duke; or An American Detective Among the Nihilists.
31. The Mystery of the Black Pool; or The Dutch Detective's Sensational Find.
32. The Veiled Lady of the Ruins; or Hamud's Ghastly Discovery.
33. Foiled by a Corpse; or A Tale of the Great Southwest.
34. Night Hawk, the Mounted Detective; or Trailing the Mountain Outlaws.
35. Kidnapped in New York; or The Dangers of a Great City.
36. Lured by a Siren; or In the Clutches of a Beautiful Blackmailer.
37. Old Sleuth's Triumph; or The Great Bronx Mystery.
38. A Trail of Blood; Being the sequel to "Old Sleuth's Triumph."
39. The Band of the "Red Oath;" or Run to Cover by a Government Spy.
40. Tempted by a Woman; or The French Detective's Narrow Escape.
41. The Million Dollar Conspiracy; or Old Sleuth to the Rescue.
42. Accused from the Coffin; or The Frustration of a Dastardly Plot.
43. Coolness Against Cunning; or Trailed by "Faithful Mike."
44. Foiled by Love; or The "Molly Maguires" Last Stand.
45. Under a Million Disguises; or Manfred's Metamorphosis.
46. Tracked by the Man of Mystery; or Manfred's Great Triumph, being a sequel to Under a Million Disguises.
47. The Human Blood-Hound; or The Bowers Detective on the Trail.
48. Manfred's Strangest Case; or Foiled by the Weird Detective.
49. Monte-Cristo Bon, the Ever Ready Detective; A Narrative of Remarkable Complications.
50. Old Terrible, the Iron Arm Detective; or The Mystery of The Beautiful Heiress.
51. The Stain of Guilt; or "Old Puritan" to the Rescue.
52. A Conspiracy of Crime; or Foiling the Kidnappers.
53. "Old Ironsides" in France; or Trailed by the Giant Detective.
54. The Beautiful Mystery of Paris; being the sequel to "Old Ironsides" in France.
55. The Gypsy Detective on the Trail; or Solving a Great Crime.
56. The Half-Breed's Secret; A Narrative of Phenomenal Adventures.
57. The Indian's Revenge; A Thrilling Narrative of Adventures.
58. A Three-Fold Mystery; A Straight Out Detective Narrative.
59. The Midnight League; or The Giant Detective in Ireland.
60. The Secret of the Dungeon; being the sequel to "The Midnight League."
61. Gypsy Frank, the Long Trail Detective; or Solving a Great Mystery.
62. The Weird Detective; or "Old Buldy" on the Trail.
63. A Terrible Mystery; A Narrative of Peculiar Detective Tricks and Devices.
64. The Strangest Mystery in the World; or Harry Brand's Winning Play.
65. The Old Miser's Secret; A Strange Detective Case.
66. The Old Miser's Secret; A Strange Detective Case.
67. The Man of Mystery; or Mephisto the Detective.
68. The Mysterious Detective; or Solving a Great Case.
69. The American Monte-Cristo; A Strange and Marvelous Narrative.
70. On Their Track; being the continuation of "The American Monte-Cristo."
71. The Omnipresent Avenger; being the continuation of "On Their Track."
72. Tragedy and Strategy; being the conclusion of "The Omnipresent Avenger."
73. The Gypsy Detective's Greatest Case; or Phil Tremaine to the Rescue.
74. The Shadows of New York; or The American Monte-Cristo's Winning Hand.
75. The Old Magician's Weird Legacy; A Tale of Marvelous Happenings in India.
76. A Mysterious Disappearance; A Singularly Strange Narrative.
77. The Red Detective; A Great Tale of Mystery.
78. The Weird Warnings of Fate; or Ebeon's Strange Case.
79. The Treasure of the Rockies; A Tale of Strange Adventures.
80. Bonanza Bardie's Winning Strike; being the sequel to "The Treasure of the Rockies."
81. Long Shadow, the Detective; A Tale of Indian Strategy.
82. The Magic Disguise Detective; The Weird Adventures of a "Transform."
83. A Young Detective's Great Shadow; A Narrative of Extraordinary Detective Devices.
84. Stealthy Brock, the Detective; or Trailed to their Doom.
85. Old Sleuth to the Rescue; A Startling Narrative of Hidden Treasure.
86. Old Sleuth, the Avenger; being the sequel to "Old Sleuth to the Rescue."
87. The Great Jewel Mystery; or The Right Man in the Case.
88. Jackson Cooper, the Wizard Detective; A Narrative of Wonderful Detective Skill.
89. Foiling the Conspirators; or Daring Tom Carey to the Rescue.
90. The Banker's Crime; or The Weird Adventures of "Phenomenal Joe."
91. Gasparoni, the Italian Detective; A Strange Weird Tale of City Life.
92. The Vengeance of Fate; being the sequel to "Gasparoni, the Italian Detective."
93. The Secret Special Detective; or "Old Transform" on the Trail.
94. The Shadow of a Crime; or the "Iron Duke's" Strange Case.
95. The Secret of the Kidnapped Heir; A Strange Detective Narrative.
96. Foiled by a Female Detective; being the sequel to "The Kidnapped Heir."
97. "Old Ironsides" in New York; or The Daughter of the G. A. R.
98. The Irish Detective; or Fergus Connor's Greatest Case.
99. The Shadow Detective; or The Mysteries of a Night.
100. Detective Thrash, the Man-Trapper; A Story of Extraordinary Detective Devices.
101. "Old Ironsides" at His Best; A Marvelous Detective Narrative.
102. Trailed by an Assassin; A Tale of Italian Vengeance.
103. The Lust of Hate; being the sequel to "Trailed by an Assassin."
104. A Golden Curse; or The Harvest of Sin.
105. The Hotel Tragedy; or Manfred's Greatest Detective Adventure.
106. The Mystery of Room 207; being the sequel to The Hotel Tragedy.
107. Gardemore, the Detective; or the King of the "Shadows."
108. The Fatal Chair; being the sequel to Gardemore, the Detective.
109. The Mask of Mystery; or The Graveyard Murder.
110. The Twisted Trail; being the sequel to the Mask of Mystery.
111. Booth Bell; or The Prince of Detectives Among the Indians.
112. The Beautiful Captive; being the continuation of Booth Bell.
113. Booth Bell's Twisted Trail; being the sequel to The Beautiful Captive.
114. The Wall Street Detective; or Harry Weir, the Lightning Trailer.
115. The Banker's Secret; being the sequel to The Wall Street Detective.
116. The Wizard's Trail; or The Mystery of a Lost Casket.
117. The House of Mystery; being the sequel to The Wizard's Trail.
118. Old Sleuth in New York; or Trailing a Great Criminal.
119. Manfred, the Ventriloquist Detective; or Wonderful "Midnight Shadows" in New York.
120. Wild Madge; or The Female Government Detective.
121. Old Electricity in New York; or Wayne Winthrop's Trail of a "Dead Secret."
122. Gamal the Hunchback; or The Adventures of a Ventriloquist.
123. Seth Bond, Detective; or the Mystery of an Old Mansion.
124. Galloway, the Detective; or Running the Crooks to Earth.
125. Old Sleuth's Quest; or A Fair Daughter's Fate.
126. Presto Quick; or The Weird Magician Detective.
127. Old Ironsides Long Trail; or The Giant Detective Out West.
128. Forging the Links; being the sequel to Old Ironsides Long Trail.
129. Queen Myra; or A Woman's Great Game of Hide and Seek.
130. The Duke of New York; or The Adventures of a Billionaire.
131. Prowler Tom, the Detective; or The Floating Beauty Mystery.
132. Man Against Man; being the sequel to Prowler Tom.
133. Old Sleuth's Silent Witness; or The Dead Hand at the Morgue.
134. The League of Four; or The Trail of the Man Tracker.
135. The House of Fear; or The Young Duke's Strange Quest.

TO BE PUBLISHED ON FRIDAY.

- Feb. 3-136. Foiled by Fate; being the sequel to The House of Fear.
 Feb. 10-137. A Dash for Millions; or Old Ironsides Trail of Mystery.
 Feb. 17-138. The Trail of Three; or The Motor Pirates' Last Stand.
 Feb. 24-139. A Dead Man's Hand; or Caught by his Own Victim.

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| No. 2. | TRACKED TO HIS LAIR | or The Pursuit of the Midnight Raider |
| No. 3. | THE BLACK DEATH | or The Curse of the Navajo Witch |
| No. 4. | THE SQUAW MAN'S REVENGE | or Kidnapped by the Piutes |
| No. 5. | TRAPPED BY THE CREES | or Tricked by a Renegade Scout |
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| No. 23. | NIGHT RIDERS OF THE NORTH-WEST..... | or The Vigilantes' Revenge |
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TO BE PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY

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| May 25— | No. 26. | THE HERMIT BANDIT'S REVENGE..... | or The League of the Fur-Stealers |
| June 1— | No. 27. | THE CURSE OF CORONATION GULF..... | or The Outlaws of Blue Waters |
| June 8— | No. 28. | THE DOOM OF THE BANDED BROTHERS..... | or The Demon Renegades |
| June 15— | No. 29. | THE WITCH OF DEVIL WHIRLPOOL..... | or The Gun-Men of Split Lake |
| June 22— | No. 30. | TORNADO BESS THE KIDNAPPER..... | or The Outlaws of Rabbit Island |
| June 29— | No. 31. | THE WRECKERS OF CARIBOU REEF..... | or Border Bandits at Bay |
| July 6— | No. 32. | THE PLAGUE SPREADERS OF HUNGRY TRAIL.... | or The Robbers of Little Wind |

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